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Contemporary indie and the construction of identity

**Discursive representations of
indie, gendered subjectivities
and the interconnections
between indie music and
popular fashion in the UK**

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Abstract

This thesis presents a historicized account of the construction of identity within contemporary indie. Indie emerged as a music scene in the early 1980s, and existing scholarly accounts of it focus on practices of music production and consumption. Indie has expanded and diversified over the last 30 years, however. Crucially, in the UK it has become increasingly interconnected into popular fashion – a development that has transformed indie from being a space solely for the construction of masculine identities, as it was in the 1980s, into a space for the construction of both masculine and feminine identities. These transformations within indie have not been addressed, and one of the contributions of this research is to fill this gap.

This thesis contributes to the field of youth cultural studies by providing new knowledge on the relationship between youth culture and popular fashion. Drawing on the Bourdieuan concept ‘field’, the thesis explores the relationship between the sub-field of indie music and the field of popular fashion in the UK, arguing that contemporary indie forms at the points of overlap between these two fields: where their value systems are mutually informative and where their value systems diverge.

Drawing on Foucault’s concepts ‘discourse’ and ‘practices of the self’, this thesis explores the way in which this complex popular cultural formation creates a space for the construction of identities. Through an analysis of media representations, it considers the discursive constitution of indie, and through an analysis of participant observation and interviews, it explores the ways in which those people participating in this formation construct the self. The thesis contributes to the field of fashion studies in that it draws together these two methodologies into an examination of the construction of identity and, more specifically, gendered identities.

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Introduction

The term 'indie' is an abbreviation of the word 'independent'. Originally, it was coined to refer to the independent music scene that emerged in the wake of punk in the United Kingdom during the late 1970s and early 1980s (Reynolds 2005). This scene emerged as a space for musical production and distribution that functioned outside of the control of – and without the financial help of – mainstream labels and trans-national distribution networks (Fonarow 2006). Accordingly, the independent music scene of the early 1980s is understood not only to be punk's chronological successor, but also its heir (Hesmondhalgh 1999). That is, uncontrolled by the music industry, the small labels and musicians working in the independent scene were to carry on the legacy of punk by revolting against and providing an alternative to 'mainstream' pop music.

Since the early 1980s, however, indie has expanded and diversified. At various points in its history, indie music has become widely visible in the UK and also internationally. In the mid-1990s, for example, indie bands like Suede, Elastica and Blur emerged onto the centre stage of popular music as part of the indie sub-genre known as Britpop. By 1997, Britpop was internationally recognized; for example, the March 1997 cover of *Vanity Fair* proclaimed that 'London Swings! Again!' – a statement that mimics *Time* magazine's pronouncement on London during what was seen to be the city's heyday in the 'Swinging Sixties'. In the early 2000s, indie music experienced a second explosion when bands like The Strokes, The Libertines, Bloc Party, Kings of Leon and the Arctic Monkeys became widely popular throughout the UK. That two of these bands – The Strokes and Kings of Leon – are American highlights developments in the production and distribution of indie music between the early 1980s and the mid-2000s. Indie is no longer produced solely on independent music labels to be distributed locally; it is an international music phenomenon. Although taking into consideration the international characteristics of indie, this thesis focuses specifically on the UK context – a focus that draws attention to the particular interests of the thesis: the intersections between indie and popular fashion in the UK.

I first developed the idea for this research project in the summer of 2005, when I arrived in the UK to begin a Master's degree in Sociology. As soon as I arrived, I came into contact with photographs of Pete Doherty and Kate Moss traipsing around Glastonbury, he wearing dangerously skinny jeans and she wearing an impossibly short gold minidress. I soon learned that Doherty was an indie musician and that Glastonbury was a major summer music festival, showcasing indie music as well as music of other genres. Thus, it

was through this image that I first became acquainted with the music-based youth cultural formation of indie and its defining look of skinny jeans. Although this image served as my introduction to indie, it also draws attention to a blurriness of the boundaries around indie. By 2005, Moss was established as an internationally recognized supermodel, and outside of her relationship with Doherty she had few ties to indie. In the image of the two at Glastonbury she is representative of contemporary fashionable ideals and specifically British fashion. Indeed, Moss is recognized as an icon of British fashion (Buttolph 2008). That Doherty and Moss appear together in this image draws attention to the key themes under investigation in this thesis: the wide visibility of indie, its relationship to popular fashion in the UK and the way in which gender is implicated within this relationship.

This side of indie has not yet been looked at by scholars of youth culture, music and fashion studies. Simon Reynolds (1989) was the first scholar to place indie under analysis, arguing that the indie look of the 1980s was resistant popular fashion. His work stands as the only existing scholarly account focused on the indie look; however, his analysis needs to be updated to account for changes in indie since the late 1980s. In contrast, other authors focus exclusively on the acts of musical production and consumption. Drawing on his own experiences as a young indie musician first in Scotland and later in New Zealand, Matthew Bannister (2006) also addresses indie from the 1980s, exploring the way in which the indie scenes in the UK and in New Zealand created a space for the construction of masculinity. According to Bannister, the two scenes differed: 'For the "Kiwi bloke", masculinity is bodily; but my masculinity was in my head' (2006: xv). Focusing on independent production, David Hesmondhalgh (1999) explores the issues of what led indie labels of the 1980s to professionalize and what the 'institutional and political-aesthetic consequences' of collaborations with major record labels were (1999: 34). His work points to the increasing popularization of indie music – a theme that stands at the centre of Rupa Huq's (2006) analysis of indie, as well. Huq explores the internationally recognized Britpop movement from the 1990s, comparing it to its American predecessor – grunge – and drawing attention to New Labour's usage of Britpop to create a sense of 'Cool Britannia' to mimic the myth of the Swinging Sixties (2006: 144). Wendy Fonarow (2006) focuses on contemporary indie in the UK, approaching analysis from an anthropological standpoint. At the centre of her analysis stands the indie gig and she analyses both the strategies of performance of musicians and the strategies of participation of indie music fans, exploring both embodied practice and practices of spectatorship. Of these authors, only Hesmondhalgh (1999) addresses specifically the issue of the evolution of indie; however, he focuses solely on the economic and aesthetic characteristics of musical production. None of these authors explore the ways in which

fashion has played a significant role within the development of indie.

This thesis fills a gap in knowledge about indie by providing details on its evolution from the early 1980s until the present (Chapter Four) and by exploring contemporary indie as a complex youth cultural formation (Chapters Five and Six). Crucially, this analysis focuses on the role of fashion and dress within the evolution and construction of indie. Through this analysis the thesis answers the question, *how do identities form within contemporary indie?*

Approaching an analysis of indie

Answering this question is far from a straightforward process, however. Firstly, it is difficult to define the boundaries of indie, specifically in relation to the indie look. Although there are defining features of this look – for example, skinny jeans – it is simultaneously marked by its ‘unspectacular’ nature. Indeed, one of the points this thesis develops is that the contemporary indie look is constructed in relation to popular fashion imagery and using popular fashion garments. In contrast, other style-based youth cultural formations are marked by their spectacular styles: for example, the Teds (Jefferson 1993 [1976]), punk (Hebdige 1979) and goth (Hodkinson 2002). Scholars analysing these subcultures have been able to pinpoint their unique styles and explore the significance of their difference to the ways in which subcultural identities form – a method of research that cannot be applied within an analysis of contemporary indie.

Accordingly, this thesis takes a different approach to the theme of the construction of youth cultural identities through clothing and appearance – one based upon the work of Michel Foucault. As Stuart Hall (1996: 13) notes, ‘Foucault, of course, would not commit anything so vulgar as actually to deploy the term “identity”’; however, he continues, ‘with “the relation to self” and the constitution and recognition of “himself” qua subject we are approaching something of the territory which belongs to the problematic of “identity”’. In the latter part of this quotation, Hall draws attention to Foucault’s later work on ‘practices of the self’, also known as the ‘relation to self’, ‘technologies of the self’ and ‘techniques of the self’, amongst other names. In short, the concept refers to those acts by which ‘the subject constitutes itself in an active fashion’ (Foucault 2000b: 291). This process, according to Foucault, occurs within discourse, however: that is, within historically specific formulations of knowledge and ‘truth’. Foucault’s concepts of ‘practices of the self’ and ‘discourse’ offer this project a means of staging an analysis of identity. That is, this thesis considers the way in which knowledge about indie is constituted within contemporary culture and then questions to what extent such ‘truths’ inform the ways in which people produce themselves through certain practices, including shopping,

displaying garments, looking at others and talking about one's ensemble. Using Foucault's work does not demand that the indie look be a spectacular look. Instead, it can be used to consider how contemporary indie creates a space for the construction of historically specific subjectivities: specifically, as this thesis shows, historically specific *gendered* subjectivities.

Such an analysis of identity can be divided into two parts: an exploration of the construction of indie and an examination of people's dress practices. Accordingly, the empirical research project is divided into two parts: textual analysis of media representations of indie and ethnographic analysis with people dressed in indie-look ensembles. Through this mixed-method approach, the thesis makes a methodological contribution to the field of fashion studies in that it draws together work on fashion representation and the self. Although there is an emerging body of literature in fashion studies that focuses on representation (Jobling 1999; König 2006; Lynge-Jorlén 2009; Nixon 1996, 1997; Rocamora 2001a, 2001b, 2009) and a small body of literature that focuses on the construction of the self through dress (Entwistle 1997, 2000; Guy, Green and Banim 2001; Tseëlon 1995; Woodward 2005, 2007), these two themes are rarely drawn together into analysis. In placing them in dialogue, however, this thesis develops a account of the formation of identity within contemporary indie that attempts to 'do justice to the lived experience of people, while, at the same time, critically analyze discourses, which form the very stuff out of which our experiences are made' (Saukko 2003: 3).

A second issue that arises when approaching an analysis of contemporary indie has to do with the relationships between youth culture and popular fashion. As is outlined in greater detail in the following chapter, the subcultural theorists of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham (CCCS) developed a framework for the analysis of youth culture that positioned working-class subcultures in opposition to the youth cultural industries (Hall and Jefferson 1993 [1976]; Hebdige 1979). Post-subcultural theorists of dress re-formulated the relationship between youth culture and the consumer industries. These theorists explored the possibilities for creativity and endless re-invention of individual youth cultural identities within the wider environment of postmodern consumer culture (Bennett 1999, 2000; Muggleton 1998, 2000; Polhemus 1994a, 1994b, 1996, 1998; Willis 1990). Within both waves of theorization, youth cultural styles are understood to be the product of the creativity of young people. The influence the fashion industry might have over these constructions is ignored (see McRobbie 1994).

This thesis responds to the body of literature on youth cultural style by problematizing the connections between youth culture, on the one side, and fashion and consumer culture, on the other. As an object of study, indie introduces such a project in

that the indie look is widely visible through its interconnections to popular fashion within the contemporary UK. To problematize this relationship, the thesis draws on the Bourdieuan (1993a, 1993b) concept 'field'. Bourdieu's concept complements Foucault's work on discourse because it serves as a means through which to locate the sources of specific discourses within the fields of cultural production from which they are produced. Within this research, the concept allows me to consider how indie is produced across music *and* popular fashion, thus considering the relationship between indie and popular fashion not merely as a 'blurring' of boundaries around youth culture, but rather as the location for the interaction of competing discourses and value systems.

The two characteristics of contemporary indie identified in this section – the fact that it is constructed in relation to popular fashion imagery and using popular fashion garments and the fact that it is constituted across music, youth culture *and* popular fashion – draw attention to the nature of contemporary indie. It is not a 'spectacular' youth cultural formation, defined outside of or in opposition to 'mainstream' popular fashion trends. Instead, indie is a 'mainstream' cultural formation, and it is worthy of sustained critical attention precisely because of this 'unspectacular' nature. The 'mainstream' has been neglected within most existing youth cultural research, and therefore the way in which it creates a context in which youth cultural identities form has not yet been examined. The present thesis thus contributes to the field of youth cultural studies not only by producing new knowledge on indie and the indie look, but also by placing a 'mainstream' cultural formation under analysis. Indeed, this contribution is part of the originality of the thesis and, as the following chapters show, serves as a foundation from which to reconsider some of the key theoretical concepts that have been used within youth cultural research: 'resistance' and 'individuality'.

Aims and objectives

The goal of this thesis is threefold. First, it aims to re-examine what is often seen to be an opposition between youth culture, on the one hand, and popular fashion and consumer culture, on the other, focusing specifically on the relationship between indie and popular fashion in the UK. Second, it problematizes the way in which contemporary indie forms precisely at the point of blurring amongst youth culture, music and popular fashion. Finally, it questions to what extent such blurring informs how identification occurs within indie, specifically focusing on the way in which gender is implicated within these processes of identification.

Thesis structure

This thesis falls into seven chapters. The first chapter is a literature review that outlines more specifically the contributions to knowledge the thesis makes. In addition to providing new knowledge about contemporary indie, specifically on how gender is implicated in the way in which it is both constructed and experienced, this thesis makes two contributions to existing bodies of scholarly research. It contributes to the field of fashion studies by drawing together an analysis of fashion representation and an analysis of the construction of the self through fashion and dress, and it contributes to the field of youth cultural studies by problematizing the blurring of boundaries between youth culture and popular fashion/consumer culture through the exploration of a 'mainstream' youth cultural formation. Chapter One reviews the existing literature from these two fields in order to highlight the gaps within the scholarship that this thesis addresses.

Chapter Two outlines the theoretical framework of the thesis. As noted already, Bourdieu's (1993a, 1993b) concept of 'field' and Foucault's concepts of 'discourse' (2002) and 'practices of the self' (1985, 2000b) serve as the central theoretical tools around which the analyses are staged. Field is used to draw attention to the way in which contemporary indie is produced across music and fashion, and Foucault's concepts are used to explore the way in which identity is formed within this complex cultural formation: through representation and practice. Significantly, following Nixon (1996, 1997) and Entwistle (1997), this thesis uses 'practices of the self' as a tool through which to build a connection between representation and practice. The works of Goffman (1959), Butler (1999 [1990]), Sennett (2002 [1977]) and Finkelstein (1991) are also addressed in this chapter in a discussion of gender and subjectivity. In drawing together these concepts into a theoretical framework, the thesis shows how subjectivity forms within a youth cultural formation that is, itself, formed at the nexus of youth culture, music and popular fashion.

Chapter Three explains the empirical research project. I collected representations of indie from a range of popular fashion and print media sources, and I conducted participant observation of and semi-structured interviews with people dressed in indie-look ensembles. Not only does this chapter detail these methods, I also evaluate the usefulness of the data collection and analysis methods in relation to the theoretical framework outlined in the preceding chapter. Further, I reflect upon the difficulties of analysing indie – a formation whose blurred boundaries simultaneously present an interesting point of research and methodological problems when developing an empirical research project.

Chapters Four through Seven are the substantive chapters of the thesis. Chapter

Four charts indie's evolution from the early 1980s until 2009. It shows how indie became integrated into the formation of popular fashion in the UK through a discussion of the way in which indie figures and styles were consecrated within the field of popular fashion: first by the style press in the 1990s and later by the high fashion press and the fashion industry in the early 2000s. Further, it uses this story of the evolution of indie to introduce several themes that are central to the analyses presented in the following chapters: a seemingly effeminate masculinity, 'stylish' femininities and the relationship between 'alternative' second-hand stores and the 'mainstream' high street.

Chapter Five examines contemporary representations of indie, analysing the objects and subject positions that are created within them. It draws attention to two discourses that emerge within these representations: a discourse of indie 'authenticity' and a discourse of 'stylish' femininity. The former discourse is produced through representations of male indie musicians, promotes a 'rejection' of fashion by de-emphasizing the role appearance plays in the construction of these musicians' identities and creates a space for the construction of masculine subjectivities. In the latter discourse, 'style' is constituted in opposition to 'fashion' as the ability of a person to construct an 'individual' look. Significantly, two divergent trends emerge within this discourse in relation to feminine subject positions. On the one hand, representations of 'stylish' femininity present 'style' as something that a range of women – including those without, what Thornton (1995) calls, 'subcultural capital' – can possess and practice. On the other hand, 'style' is re-coded as an unattainable fashionable ideal, practiced only by industry insiders.

Chapter Six focuses on the theme of the self, exploring not only the dress practices and strategies of self-representation in which the respondents engage, but also the types of people into which they work to produce themselves. It finds that the way in which the respondents work to produce themselves is linked to gender and the possession of variable forms of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu 1984). It begins by exploring the varying ways in which some of the male respondents worked to construct the self, analysing their discourses by considering the forms of capital they mobilize: 'subcultural capital' (Thornton 1995) and/or 'fashion capital' (Rocamora 2002; Entwistle and Rocamora 2006). The chapter continues by discussing to what extent some of the female respondents inhabit the subject positions created within contemporary representations of 'style'. It introduces the concept alternative fashion capital to account for the form of capital exercised by many of the (mostly female) respondents who, through their 'mixing and matching' of second-hand and high street garments into an ensemble, work to integrate elements of 'alternative' and 'mainstream' fashion cultures.

Chapter Seven draws upon and extends the analyses presented in the three preceding chapters, specifically in relation to two themes: 'style' and second-hand garments. Although 'style' is a discursive construct that works to form available subject positions within indie (Chapter Five) and participants within indie use second-hand garments to create looks (Chapter Six), these two – 'style' and second-hand garments – have histories and 'lives' that extend beyond indie. Chapter Seven thus turns away from the explicit investigation of indie to examine the way in which some agents within the contemporary field of popular fashion in the UK mobilize their connections to 'style' and second-hand garments in order to position themselves within this field. The chapter relates the development of the stylist from the 1980s until the present day and explores the specific case study of Beyond Retro – a large-scale, London-based second-hand retailer. Through these analyses it demonstrates that the notion of the 'alternative' has acquired a positive value within the contemporary field of popular fashion in the UK. The chapter thus provides a context within which to situate the analysis of indie. That is, the rise in indie's visibility over the past 30 years and its continued relevance to the wider popular fashion environment has resulted, at least in part, from contemporaneous changes within retailing and styling. Reciprocally, the longevity of indie within contemporary popular culture in the UK has added to the sustained interest in and development of styling and second-hand retailing.

Argument

This thesis reveals how contemporary indie is a 'mainstream' youth cultural formation that is constituted through discourses emerging from the sub-field of indie music and the field of popular fashion in the UK. The thesis argues that the value systems of these two fields at times coincide and at other times contrast, creating an ambiguous space within which contemporary indie takes shape. The thesis argues further that identities are produced within indie in and through this ambiguity. For male participants within indie, identity is formed through a struggle between the 'rejection' of fashion, as promoted within contemporary representations of male indie musicians, and an acceptance of fashion, as demonstrated through the increasing significance of fashion to indie music culture. For female participants within indie, identity is formed in relation to their skills at incorporating aspects of 'alternative' cultures – such as second-hand garments – into their fashionable dress practices. The fact that the female respondents mobilise, what I call, alternative fashion capital points attention to evolution of the value systems of the contemporary field of fashion. This point is further demonstrated through an analysis of agents within this field – namely, stylists and the second-hand chain-store Beyond Retro –

who mobilise their associations with the 'alternative' for positive gains within the field. This thesis argues that contemporary fashion in the UK is marked not only by a collapse of the division between 'high' and 'low' culture (see Rocamora 2001a, 2001b), but also by a collapse of the division between 'alternative' youth, music and style cultures, on the one hand, and 'mainstream' fashion cultures, on the other. It is within this environment of blurred boundaries and shifting value systems that a 'mainstream' youth cultural formation like indie can emerge, presenting itself in such a way as to be noticeable as a formation, but simultaneously avoiding classification through existing methods of youth cultural analysis.

Chapter One

Approaching the literature: Fashion and youth culture

This analysis of the construction of identity within contemporary indie contributes new knowledge to the fields of fashion studies and youth cultural studies. Drawing on the Foucauldian concepts 'discourse' (2002) and 'practices of the self' (1985, 1988, 2000b), which are discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, the thesis places in dialogue analyses of fashion representation and analyses of the experience and practice of dress, thus building a methodological bridge between two separate trajectories of fashion research. Drawing on the Bourdieuan (1993a, 1993b) concept field, also discussed in the following chapter, the thesis considers the way in which contemporary indie emerges precisely at a point of blurring amongst youth, music and fashion cultures, thus presenting a new approach to the problematization of the boundaries between youth culture and wider popular fashion and consumer cultures. This chapter reviews the existing literature from these two fields in order to highlight the gaps within the scholarship, which this thesis fills.

1. Approaches to fashion and dress

Over the past several decades, fashion studies emerged as an interdisciplinary field of scholarly research. Fashion scholars have engaged in a variety of different projects, exploring a range of themes. For example, scholars have looked at both the material and symbolic production of fashion (Entwistle 2009; Evans and Thornton 1989; Lynge-Jorlén 2009; McRobbie 1998; Rocamora, 2001a, 2001b, 2009). The metropolitan environment of the city stands at the centre of much fashion scholarship (Beward and Gilbert 2006; Gilbert 2000; Wilson 1991), as does the relationship between fashion and national geographies (Beward, Conekin and Cox 2002; Goodrum 2005), and London has been of particularly keen interest to fashion theorists (Beward 2004, Beward, Ehrman and Evans 2004; O'Byrne 2009; O'Neill 2007; Tucker 1998). Further, several scholars have explored the connections between London fashion and youth culture (Beward, Gilbert and Lister 2006; McRobbie 1998; Radner 2001). That such connections amongst youth culture, London and fashion exist is unsurprising. As Angela McRobbie (1998: 8) explains, 'in the United Kingdom [fashion] is inextricably connected with the growth of pop music

and popular culture'. She continues, that UK fashion 'is a "popular" thing, rather than an "elite" thing' (see also Rocamora 2001a, 2001b). McRobbie's point serves as a foundation for this thesis, as it is in the UK context more so than in other geographies that the connections between indie and popular fashion can be identified and problematized.

Perhaps the most significant way in which research on fashion has developed is in relation to the diverse theme of identity. For example, Katherine Appleford (2011) explores how fashion continues to function as a marker of class, even though, she notes, those early theories linking fashion and class (Simmel 1971; Veblen 1994 [1899]) seem outdated within the contemporary context (Appleford 2011: 10). Shaun Cole's (2000b) work on gay men's dress points to the way in which gay men have used clothing to develop a series of codes marking their sexuality to others with the same sets of knowledges. Indeed, Cole's (2000b) work as well as that of Caroline Evans and Lorraine Gamman (1995) and Reina Lewis (2002) point to the constructive overlaps between sexuality and subculture. Although, as these preceding examples show, various forms of identity have been problematized within fashion research, gender is the form of identity most frequently addressed within the literature.

Fashion has long been associated with women (Flügel 1976 [1930]; Simmel 1973; see also Wilson 1992), and scholars have used it as a tool through which to explore the construction of femininity (Craik 1993; Evans and Thornton 1989; MacDonald 1995; Thesander 1997; Wilson 1985). A small body of literature on the 'new man' produced in the 1990s draws attention to the way in which fashion can be used to explore the construction of masculinity, as well (Edwards 1997; Mort 1996; Nixon 1996, 1997). One of the contributions of this 'new man' literature is that it demonstrates that, in Frank Mort's (1996: 10) words, 'Masculinity is multiform, rather than unitary and monolithic. The object of inquiry is masculinities, not masculinity' (emphasis in original). More recent research within fashion studies has explored the multiple and varying ways in which gender is produced through fashion (for example, Cole 2000a on the 'macho man'; Miller 2011 on the musical identities of 'witchy women' and 'white suited men'). This thesis contributes to this body of literature by exploring the construction of contemporary indie masculinities and femininities. Although Bannister (2006) has looked at the construction of indie masculinity in the 1980s, no one has approached contemporary indie masculinity, nor the fact that contemporary indie is not merely a space for the construction of masculine identities, but also a space for the construction of feminine identities.

Not only does this thesis add to the body of literature that explores gender through an analysis of fashion, it also adds to two strands of empirical research within fashion studies: that concerned with fashion representations and that concerned with the

construction of the self through dress practices. Within the existing literature these themes are rarely explored in dialogue with one another, not least because they have emerged from separate scholarly traditions: for the former, cultural and media studies; and, for the latter, what Tim Edwards (2011: 7) has called the field of ‘social scientific’ research, which includes the disciplines of sociology, psychology, anthropology and history. This thesis attempts to overcome this methodological divide by framing analysis through Foucault’s concepts of ‘discourse’ and ‘practices of the self’ – a theoretical framework that is outlined in greater detail in the following chapter. In brief, Foucault’s body of work offers the tools through which to consider, firstly, how a body of discursive representations creates certain subject positions and, secondly, how people inhabit such representations as they engage in ‘practices of the self’, for example, dress practices. The remainder of this section reviews the scholarly projects that provide models for these two parts of the present research.

1.1. *Fashion representation*

Although not speaking specifically about fashion representation, Hall (1997b) identifies semiotics and discourse as two approaches to the analysis of representation. Scholars of fashion studies have drawn on both approaches, as they are useful in drawing attention to the meanings carried and/or constituted within fashion representation (Barthes 1983; Jobling 1999; Nixon 1996, 1997; Rocamora 2009). This thesis aligns itself with the work of these scholars, specifically that of Sean Nixon and Agnès Rocamora, in that it uses the Foucauldian concept ‘discourse’ to explore the way in which gendered subjectivities are produced within media discourse.

Paul Jobling (1999) draws on Roland Barthes’s (1983) *The Fashion System* when engaging in a comparative analysis of the representational systems of three British magazine titles over the period spanning from 1980 to 1996: *Vogue*, *The Face* and *Arena*. Barthes (1983) draws attention to the distinction between ‘real’ clothing and ‘represented’ clothing. For Barthes, ‘represented’ clothing is not merely a ‘copy of reality’ (1983: 10); it is not a copy of ‘real’ clothing. Instead, ‘represented’ clothing forms its own system – one that works ‘to circulate Fashion broadly as *meaning*’ (1983: 10; emphasis in original). Jobling draws on this distinction in a discussion of the importance of analysing fashion representation, arguing that magazines ‘[persuade] us to overlook the mundane materiality and utility of the garments portrayed, and to ruminate instead on the symbolism of fashion’ (1999: 1). The disjuncture between ‘real’ and ‘represented’ clothing that Barthes and Jobling create is of significance to this thesis because it undermines an integrated analysis of representation – a central theme of this research.

In contrast, by drawing on the work of Foucault, Nixon (1996, 1997) and Rocamora (2009) point attention to the way in which fashionable representations produce *subject positions* – that is, potential identities for readers to inhabit. Nixon (1996, 1997) explores the construction of a historically specific form of masculinity – one that both draws on and challenges ‘dominant scripts of masculinity’ (1997: 301): the ‘new man’. At the centre of Nixon’s investigation are images of the ‘new man’ that appeared within ‘style’ and ‘lifestyle’ magazines throughout the 1980s (1997: 295), for ‘it was within the fashion photography of these magazines that the new codings of masculinity were most extensively elaborated’ (1996: 4). He asks,

[...] what do these images mean? What do they tell us about the changing meaning of masculinity in the 1980s and 1990s? And what are the consequences of these shifts in the way masculinity is being represented for gender relations as a whole? (1997: 295).

Nixon looks at three different types of representation: street-style, ‘Italian-American’ and ‘Conservative Englishness’. Through a consideration of the casting, clothing worn, posture, lighting and film stock and image-cropping, he examines the way in which the ‘New Man’ is coded within these images (1997: 313-4). For example, he argues that ‘New Man’ masculinity is coded as a combination of ‘boyish softness and a harder, assertive masculinity’ through the casting of young, tough looking models (1997: 313). Further, Nixon points attention to the way in which these images are interwoven into a wider discursive formation. That is, there is ‘the need to grasp the proliferation of this imagery as a *regime of representation*’ that includes ‘television advertising, press advertising, menswear shops and popular magazines for men’ (1996: 4; emphasis added). In other words, there is a range of discursive sites that produce representations of the ‘new man’. Nixon’s work thus diversifies the theme of ‘fashion representation’, moving beyond the pages of the fashion press, towards moving images and retail spaces. Following Foucault, he suggests that this regime of representation ‘[marks] the formation of a new subject-position formed in relation to the practices of fashion, style and individual consumption’ (1997: 315).

All of these discursive sites beckon living men to inhabit the subject position of the ‘new man’. Nixon (1996, 1997) offers Foucault’s concept ‘practices of the self’, alongside psychoanalysis, as a means through which to articulate living men to the sites of discursive production of the ‘new man’. Contrasting ‘practices of the self’ with psychoanalysis, he suggests ‘practices of the self’ allow a researcher to consider how men can take up the subject position created through the ‘new man’ representations *through practice*, as opposed to through ‘forms of self-representation in either consciousness or

the unconscious' (1997: 323).

The practices of grooming and dressing and the activity of shopping represent practices through which the attributes and characteristics of masculinity coded in relation to the 'new man' imagery might be operationalized or performed as a historical identity (1997: 323).

As discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, this thesis follows Nixon in using 'practices of the self' as a means of placing in dialogue discursive representations, on the one hand, and people's dress practices and conceptions of the self, on the other.

Similarly, Rocamora (2009) explores the way in which the city of Paris and some of its figures – '*la Parisienne*' and '*la Passante*' – are constructed within French fashion media discourse. In analysing French fashion media discourse, Rocamora draws attention to a discursive formation specific to the field of fashion; however, drawing on Foucault, she explains, 'Discourse is not text-specific' (2009: 56). Accordingly, she argues that the French fashion media texts she analyses form part of a 'diversity of texts from various genres and historical times' from which a certain set of ideas and values about Paris and Parisian femininity emanate (2009: xvii). '*La Parisienne*', for example, is constituted within a range of media, literary and artistic texts 'as the material embodiment and personification of the French capital, of its *esprit*' (2009: 118). Specifically within the contemporary French fashion media, '*Parisiennes* are represented as tastemakers because living in the French capital of taste, fashion models because the inhabitants of the model fashion city' (2009: 98). Moreover, it is in the French fashion media discourse that a connection between the representation of this feminine figure and the experiences of female readers is forged. Rocamora suggests that readers of magazines like *Vogue Paris* are invited to emulate *la Parisienne* through the consumption of fashion (2009: 121).

Nixon (1996, 1997) and Rocamora's (2009) work is extremely significant to the present research as it draws a connection between 'represented' clothing and 'real' clothing through an analysis of the discursive construction of subjectivities, pointing attention to the ways in which people are invited to take up these subjectivities in their own dress practices. This thesis follows their work, whilst also extending it. Not only does this thesis explore discursive representation, but it also investigates to what extent people inhabit the subject positions created within contemporary representations of indie as they work to construct the self through dress practice.

1.2. *Fashion, dress and the self*

There is a small body of literature dedicated to the empirical exploration of the way in which people construct the self through dress practice (Entwistle 1997, 2000; Guy, Green

and Banim 2001; Tseëlon 1995; Woodward 2005, 2007). Significantly, all of this work focuses on the construction of the feminine self. Thus, in addition to a methodological contribution of drawing together into analysis the themes of discourse and the self, this thesis contributes to the field of fashion studies by providing insight into how masculine selves are constructed through dress practice. It draws on existing work within this area by considering the way in which the self is produced both through dress practices and in relation to social discourses.

Dress practice stands at the centre of Sophie Woodward's (2005, 2007) work. Through her in-depth analysis of the act of getting dressed, Woodward draws attention to the significance of clothing to the construction of the self. She engages in a series of in-depth interviews with women about the way in which they dress, and she also observes the interviewees' dress practices *in situ*, joining the women in their bedrooms as they select ensembles to wear. According to Woodward, the self is externalized through clothing.

Clothing, as a material form, gives women the sensation of having a self, including a self with agency. Through clothing, women attempt to create themselves; when successful, women have a sense that this is 'me'. This 'me' is present by virtue of being materialized, and indeed partially created, through the clothing (2007: 150-151).

In short, 'because clothing forms an extension of the self and thus women know what clothing they like, they have a sense of who they are through clothing' (2007: 156). In firmly identifying the link between dress and the self, Woodward's work provides a platform from which this research is staged. That is, this research considers the self as something that can be produced through practices of dress – significantly, this thesis contends, practices that occur *within discourse*.

Woodward (2005, 2007) acknowledges external influences on women's dress practices, as well. She suggests that the act of 'getting dressed' is 'the moment where the external influences of social expectations and internal, personal aesthetics articulate' (2005: 12).

Dressing involves considerations of whether clothing is socially suitable for the occasion and the age, status and occupation of a woman; in turn, these considerations must be balanced with whether a woman feels an item 'is her'. Dressing involves the construction of the self through socially acceptable modes of dressing. As such, notions of roles and expectations are negotiated with items that touch the body, and it is impossible for such concerns to remain entirely social (2007: 20-21).

For example, Woodward (2007) explains, when getting dressed, women internalize the

gaze of the other; however, their own ideal self-image also works to inform what they decide to wear. She continues, relationships with mothers, sisters and husbands work to shape what is worn. However, in choosing which items to wear a woman determines for herself how this relationship is to be lived out through dress and how it will inform her conception of self. As the self is forged through the act of getting dressed, it is forged through these articulations between structural determinants and individual choices.

Several of the authors, whose work is included in Ali Guy, Eileen Green and Maura Banim's (2001) edited volume, similarly explore the way in which the experience of dress is informed by structuring determinants. For example, Eileen Green (2001) and Susan Kaiser, Joan Chandler and Tania Hammidi (2001) consider the effects of the academic environment on the clothing choices of female academics. Green (2001) focuses specifically on the issue of ageing women within the 'overwhelmingly male territory' of academia (2001: 98). She interviews female professors, exploring the way in which they create a 'professorial authority' (2001: 98) by avoiding "'girly" and submissive clothes' (104), whilst simultaneously dealing with issues of age-related weight gain. Using the data collected from 52 interviews with female academics from a range of disciplines, Kaiser, Chandler and Hammidi (2001) explore the issue of 'identity *not*' (Freitas *et al*, cited in Kaiser, Chandler and Hammidi 2001: 120). They find, in their clothing choices female academics avoid the power suit, as 'It represents a kind of uniform professionalism that is viewed as too slick and hierarchical for the world of intellectual ideas' (2001: 120-121). At the same time, they avoid dressing too casually, so as to create a distinction between their students and themselves. These two articles point to the fact that not only the context of the workplace, but social discourses organizing how female academics should (and should not) appear informs the dress practices of these women.

Social discourse stands at the centre of Efrat Tseëlon's (1995) analysis of the feminine self. She considers 'the ways in which Western woman is expected to appear [*and*] the ways these expectations shape her own self-perceptions' (Tseëlon 1995: 1). Her research falls into two parts. On the one hand, she examines, what she calls, the 'paradoxes' of femininity that shape the way in which femininity is constructed: for example, 'the modesty paradox – the woman is constructed as seduction – to be for ever punished for it' and 'the visibility paradox – the woman is constructed as a spectacle while being culturally invisible' (1995: 5). She looks at a range of cultural texts, varying from religious treatises to scholarly studies, to explore the way in which such paradoxes emerge and manifest. On the other hand, she engages in an empirical investigation of women's attitudes towards fashion and the self, analysing women's responses to questionnaires she developed. She places the two aspects of research in dialogue with one

another, questioning to what extent the paradoxes of femininity are incorporated into the respondents' understanding of the relationship between fashion and the self.

Joanne Entwistle (1997, 2000) similarly places the tension between discourse and the self at the centre of her analysis of fashion, dress and the self. She draws a distinction between the terms 'fashion' and 'dress', identifying the former 'as a system, idea or aesthetic' and the latter as 'the meanings given to particular practices of clothing and adornment' (2000: 3). Further, she argues that existing research has focused on either 'fashion' or 'dress' and has failed to integrate an analysis of the two. In contrast, she proposes 'situated bodily practice' as a theoretical framework for analysis that considers both 'fashion' and 'dress'. In Entwistle's words, 'situated bodily practice'

[...] insists on understanding fashion as a structuring determinant on dress but examines the way in which fashion is translated into everyday dress. In doing so, it focuses attention on the body as the link between the two: fashion articulates the body, producing discourses on the body which are translated into dress through the bodily practices of dressing on the part of individuals. In other words, in everyday life, fashion becomes embodied (2000: 4).

Entwistle (1997) applies this framework of 'situated bodily practice' within her analysis of the construction and experience of the female 'professional' self. In this research she examines the discourse on power dressing that emerged in the 1980s, suggesting that this discourse 'draws on the notion of an "enterprising" subject' (1997: 154). Within the 'enterprise culture' of the 1980s, each worker was '[called] to be a self-managing, self-reliant individual' (1997: 147). That is, each worker was called to invest in him/herself, to work upon him/herself, in order to constitute him/herself as an 'enterprising' subject. Entwistle identifies this 'enterprise' discourse as a means of calling people to engage in 'practices of the self': 'not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being' (Foucault 1985: 10) into 'enterprising' subjects. Specifically, for women, these enterprising 'practices of the self' include the act of 'power dressing'. Entwistle (1997: 161) writes,

...the responsibility for success in the workplace is shifted on to the shoulders of the individual woman, who must signal her commitment to her work in every way possible, including her dress. This burden of personal responsibility translates into a concern with how to present the body: what clothes and make-up to wear as well as how to walk, talk and generally move about the world of work.

She engages in a series of in-depth interviews, through which she explores the ways in which these discourses are put into practice on an everyday basis: that is, the ways in which these discourses on 'professional' femininity are internalized into her respondents'

own self-understanding.

Following these authors, and Entwistle (1997) in particular, the present thesis considers the way in which the self is constructed both through dress practices and in relation to social discourse. Crucially, the discourses examined in this thesis are those that are constituted within contemporary fashion representations. Thus this thesis draws together into an exploration of identity both an analysis of fashion representation and an analysis of dress.

2. Youth cultural studies

That clothing and appearance are central to the construction of identities is a well-developed theme within the field of youth cultural studies. Subcultural theory developed, in large part, to make sense of the 'spectacular' styles of post-war working-class youth subcultures (Hall and Jefferson 1993 [1976]). After subcultural studies, 'style' has continued to be a point of problematization within youth cultural analyses (Bennett 2000; Muggleton 1998, 2000; Polhemus 1994a, 1994b, 1996, 1998; Willis 1990). Within both waves of analysis, however, 'style' is theorized in opposition to 'fashion'. This point is significant to this thesis, as contemporary indie is constituted through an engagement with popular fashion: its imagery, its garments and those professionals working within the industry. Accordingly, after reviewing the existing literature on style from youth cultural studies, this section considers potential frameworks through which to consider contemporary indie as a fluid formation, constituted across youth culture, music *and* popular fashion: 'neo-tribe' (Maffesoli 1996; Bennett 1999), the 'local' (Bennett 2000), 'scene' (Stahl 2004) and the media (Thornton 1995).

2.1. Subcultural theory

The exploration and analysis of youth culture has been a central focus within British cultural studies. British cultural studies emerged as a field of scholarly research at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in the 1960s and 1970s. Drawing on Raymond Williams's (1990 [1958]) inclusive definition of 'culture', the CCCS scholars placed the seemingly mundane activities of everyday life under investigation. Specifically, the CCCS theorists focused on examining the activities, convictions and the spectacular visual appearances of Britain's post-World War II youth 'subcultures', producing *Resistance through Rituals* (1993 [1976]) as the key text outlining their work. Within this work the CCCS scholars proposed a framework for analysing youth culture, which positions youth culture – specifically, subcultures – as resistant to dominant culture and the commercial youth industries. This framework is attractive for its focus on the

themes of ‘resistance’ and ‘incorporation’; however, as shall be shown in the following two sub-sections, there are gaps within subcultural theory that need to be addressed in order to stage an analysis of more recent youth cultural activity.

The goal of the CCCS theorists was to ‘de-throne or *de-construct* the term “Youth Culture” – a term that became widely used in the 1960s (Clarke *et al.* 1993 [1976]: 16). According to these scholars, the term conflates two distinct processes: that ‘youth groups fed off and appropriated things provided by the market’, on the one hand, and that ‘the market tried to expropriate and incorporate things produced by the sub-cultures’, on the other (Clarke *et al.* 1993 [1976]: 16). In separating these two distinct cultural practices, the CCCS theorists worked to bring attention to ‘the dialectic between youth and the youth market industry’ (Clarke *et al.* 1993 [1976]: 16) – the dialectic of ‘resistance’ and ‘incorporation’. In order to engage in this analysis, the CCCS theorists proposed to replace the concept ‘Youth Culture’ with that of ‘sub-culture’. The latter term avoids much of the imprecision of the former, as subcultures are specifically groups of *working-class youth*. The term ‘subculture’, however, does not refer to *all* working-class youth, but rather only those sub-groups that ‘exhibit a distinctive enough shape and structure to make them identifiably different from their “parent” culture’ – working-class culture (Clarke *et al.* 1993 [1976]: 13-14).

In highlighting the significance of class to an analysis of youth, the CCCS theorists firmly position class as the central axis around which post-war Britain is organized. Further, they draw on Antonio Gramsci’s concept ‘hegemony’ to explain the relations between classes within post-war Britain. Following Gramsci, hegemony, they suggest, is ‘the power to frame alternatives and contain opportunities, *to win and shape consent*, so that the granting of legitimacy to the dominant classes appears not only “spontaneous”, but natural and normal’ (Clarke *et al.* 1993 [1976]: 38; emphasis in original). They continue,

Hegemony is not simply ‘class rule’. It requires to some degree the ‘consent’ of the subordinate class, which has, in turn, to be won and secured; this, an ascendancy of social authority, not only in the state but in civil society as well, in culture and ideology. Hegemony prevails when ruling classes not only rule or ‘direct’ but *lead* (Clarke *et al.* 1993 [1976]: 39; emphasis in original).

The authors argue that, although this form of subordination through consent was characteristic of British society in the 1950s, signs of resistance began to emerge in the 1960s and 1970s (Clarke *et al.* 1993 [1976]: 39). Specifically, the CCCS theorists argue, the youth sub-cultures – such as the Teds, Mods, Rockers and Skinheads – presented an active resistance to ‘hegemonic domination’ (Clarke *et al.* 1993 [1976]: 39). One of the

ways in which they did so was by constructing unique styles.

In order to produce a style, a subcultural group combines a variety of 'normal' objects together – an activity defined through Claude Lévi-Strauss's concept of *bricolage* (Clarke 1993 [1976]: 177). The purpose of a style is twofold. On the one hand, it works to demonstrate a subculture's unique identity. As John Clarke *et al.* explain,

Things simply appropriated and worn (or listened to) do not make a style. What makes a style is the activity of stylization – the active organization of objects with activities and outlooks, which produce an organized group-identity (1993 [1976]: 54).

On the other hand, it is through style that subcultural participants resist hegemonic domination. Through a variety of forms of bricolage – “inflection”, “intensification”, “exaggeration”, “isolation”, and “combination” (Clarke *et al.* 1993 [1976]: 55-56) – subcultural participants subvert the meanings given to objects by the dominant culture.

Commodities are, also, cultural *signs*. They have already been invested, by the dominant culture, with meanings, associations, social connotations. Many of these meanings seem fixed and 'natural'. But this is only because the dominant culture has so fully appropriated them to its use, that the meanings which it attributes to the commodities have come to appear as the only meaning which they can express. In fact, in cultural systems, there is no 'natural' meaning as such (Clarke *et al.* 1993 [1976]: 55).

In constructing styles, subculturalists are 'subverting and transforming these things, from their given meaning and use, to other meanings and uses' (Clarke *et al.* 1993 [1976]: 54). The form of resistance manifest in the creation of subcultural styles is a form of ideological resistance, played out at the level of meaning.

In *Subculture: The meaning of style*, Dick Hebdige (1979) expands upon the work of the contributors to *Resistance through Rituals* (1993 [1976]). He stresses that the act of subverting dominant meanings through the creation of styles is a radically subversive act. To make this point, he draws an analogy with the figure of Jean Genet. Imprisoned by the Spanish police and simultaneously humiliated by them for possessing a tube of Vaseline – a marker of his homosexuality, Genet remains defiant. Quoting from Genet, Hebdige writes, the tube 'becomes a symbol of his “triumph” – “I would rather have shed blood than repudiate that silly object”' (1979: 3). Hebdige argues that, like Genet's tube of Vaseline, subcultural styles are 'dismissed, denounced and canonized' by 'legitimate' discourse, whilst simultaneously '[taking] on a symbolic dimension, becoming a form of stigmata, token of a self-imposed exile' for the subcultures that produce them (1979: 2). Hebdige's account of subcultural style is a romanticized account of the subversion of dominant meanings – a point that Hebdige, himself, acknowledges (1979: 138). For him,

style is 'a form of Refusal, the elevation of crime into art' (1979: 2). However, once that style diffuses, once it is appropriated by the youth cultural industries and mass-produced for consumption, its power is lost.

Several criticisms of the subcultural theorization of style are relevant to this thesis (Clarke 1982; McRobbie 1989b, 1994). Gary Clarke (1982) places the subcultural concept 'diffusion' under analysis. He suggests that, within subcultural theory the diffusion of a style – that is, its widespread acceptance by those people who are not its originators – is interpreted to be 'the death knell of a style' (Brake, cited in Clarke 1982: 22). Clarke's criticism pinpoints what can arguably be called an elitism of subcultural theory, as 'the theory rests upon a view of the rest of society as straight, incorporated in a consensus and willing undividedly to scream loud in any moral panic' (1982: 11). In contrast, he suggests, 'Any future analysis of youth should take this breakthrough of style as its starting point and not as the end of the analysis' (1982: 23). Clarke's criticism serves as a foundation from which this thesis's argument is staged. As is mentioned in the introduction, it is precisely the fact that indie has expanded and diversified that makes it an important object of research.

Angela McRobbie (1989b, 1994) argues that the straightforward opposition between 'resistant' subcultures and the 'commercial' fashion industry upon which the subcultural theorists rely fails to account for the complexity of the relationship between the two. She writes,

[...] in the early days of subcultural theory from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) it was important to draw a line between youth culture and pop culture, crediting the former with a form of symbolic class authenticity and the latter with all the marks of the consumer culture (1994: 156).

As a result, McRobbie argues, 'music and style and other related activities sprang on to the subcultural theory stage as though from nowhere' (1994: 161). 'In reality', however, 'the two [subculture and popular fashion] were always merged, involved in an ongoing relationship' (McRobbie 1994: 156). One of the ways in which McRobbie (1989b) draws attention to this 'ongoing relationship' is through an analysis of London's second-hand ragmarkets. She brings attention to the fact that the garments used in the creation of subcultural styles were purchased in ragmarkets. Speaking specifically about the punk look, she argues, this point was ignored by the subcultural theorists because it 'went against the grain of those analyses which saw the adoption of punk style as an act of creative defiance far removed from the mundane act of buying' (1989b: 25). Further, 'shopping has been considered a feminine activity' (1989b: 24) and thus unworthy of

critical attention. She explains, 'Youth sociologists have looked mainly at the activities of adolescent boys and young men and their attention has been directed to those areas of experience which have a strongly masculine image' (McRobbie 1989b: 24). Within subcultural theory 'authenticity' is constructed not only as 'anti-commercial', but also as 'masculine'. McRobbie's criticisms are extremely important to this thesis, as this study explores the way in which such distinctions continue to persist within contemporary indie. That is, within contemporary indie, masculinity is constituted as 'authentic' and 'anti-commercial', whilst femininity is constituted in a way that is more closely aligned with fashion and consumer culture. Such differences also emerge within Dunja Brill's (2007) recent work on goth.

Although problematic for the reasons discussed by Clarke (1982) and McRobbie (1989b, 1994), subcultural theory is useful in that it politicizes the seemingly mundane activities of young people. It is rooted within a conception of culture as a struggle. As Stuart Hall writes,

It is a conception of culture which [...] treats the domain of cultural forms and activities as a constantly changing field. Then it looks at the relations which constantly structure this field into dominant and subordinate formations. It looks at the process by which these relations of dominance and subordination are articulated (2006: 484).

As Caroline Evans (1997: 183) notes, 'The dialectical model of culture' upon which British cultural studies relies 'is a constantly oscillating and contradictory model in which *questions of both resistance and consent to the dominant culture can be explored*' (emphasis added). However, subcultural theory does not provide a framework for analysing youth cultural activity that does not stem from working-class dissatisfaction with society. Indeed, the CCCS scholars qualify their research by stating that their theories and conclusions are only relevant to those post-war youth subcultures whose reaction to working-class subordination took a spectacular (and, therefore, subcultural) response (Clarke *et al.* 1993 [1976]: 16). Accordingly, one of the main tasks set to later youth cultural scholars has been to re-interpret the theories and tools developed within subcultural studies in a way that suits an analysis of youth cultural activity *after* subculture, *after* resistance.

2.2. The problem of 'resistance'

From the 1990s onwards, several youth cultural theorists turned away from the class-based model of Gramscian resistance upon which subcultural theory relies. As Evans (1997: 171) writes, the resistance-focused 'approach gives us a perfectly sound model,

formulated in the 1970s, of subcultures from the 1950s and 1960s, but it is debatable whether it still works in the 1990s'. As Chris Barker (2008: 428) explains, from the 1990s onwards, youth cultural 'creativity [is understood to take] place "inside the whale" of postmodern consumer capitalism. Here the binary divisions of inside-outside and authentic-manufactured collapse'. Accordingly, in the 1990s the field of youth cultural studies saw a shift in the theoretical models used within research. That is, as youth culture was increasingly theorized to be a part of popular culture (and not rebelling against it), the Gramscian framework, in relation to which subcultural studies developed, was no longer seen to be appropriate for youth cultural research. Working-class resistance was no longer conceived to be the sole motivation behind youth cultural formation and activity. Instead, much research on youth culture from the 1990s, specifically that concerning young people's consumption and use of clothing, developed in relation to theories of postmodernism and consumer culture (Bennett 1999; Muggleton 1998, 2000; Polhemus 1994a, 1994b, 1996, 1998; Willis 1990). This literature focuses on the possibilities within youth culture for the creation and re-creation of individual identities.

At the centre of the versions of post-subcultural style presented by Ted Polhemus (1994a, 1994b, 1996, 1998) and David Muggleton (1998, 2000) lies the theme of postmodern identity construction. Zygmunt Bauman (1996) argues that postmodern identities are constantly shifting. He writes,

In the life-game of postmodern consumers the rules of the game keep changing in the course of playing. The sensible strategy is therefore to keep each game short – so that a sensibly played game of life calls for the splitting of one big all-embracing game with huge stakes into a series of brief and narrow games with small ones (1996: 24).

This movement *through* identities is a central component of Polhemus's definition of style, yet is questioned by Muggleton.

Polhemus (1994a, 1994b, 1996, 1998) argues that youth cultural participants can pick and choose styles as they please from the 'supermarket of style'. As a result, youth cultural participants do not commit themselves to any particular style, but rather jump around amongst styles. He writes,

[...] we have all these different options spread out for us and it is just like choosing tins of soup. You can't really make up your mind so you think, I'll have a couple of those and a couple of these (1994a: 31).

There are no authentic subcultural identities in the 'supermarket of style' – only stylistic

options with which people can play. Thus, combinations like 'Gay Skinheads, Haute Couture Grunge, Techno Hippies, Pervy Puritans, TV Babes with Stubble, Futuristic Revivalists, Bikers for Jesus, *Femme Fatale* Feminists' (1998: 132) can emerge. These 'unexpected possibilities born of unlikely partners...are infinite' (1994a: 31). Moreover, because of the contradictions they embody, these combinations mean 'everything and nothing' (1998: 132). Polhemus calls this distortion of subcultural meanings 'semiological terrorism' (1998: 132) because no sense can be made of styles after this distortion. According to Polhemus, participants in the 'supermarket of style' revel in their distinctive individual identities and 'celebrate the truth of falsehood, the authenticity of simulation, the meaningfulness of gibberish' (1994a: 31). In other words, they celebrate the postmodern breakdown of the link between signifier and signified (Baudrillard 2001).

Although concurring with Polhemus that style is produced at the individual level, Muggleton (1998, 2000) challenges one of the foundational elements of Polhemus's 'supermarket of style': that people casually pick up and discard various styles. Muggleton bases his conclusions on his empirical work that consisted of a series of qualitative interviews with subcultural participants in order 'to uncover the subjective meanings, values and motives of those involved in style subcultures such as punk, goth, skinhead, hippy, etc.' (2000: 5). Muggleton's work can be related to the work discussed in the section of this chapter entitled 'Fashion, dress and the self' (Section 1.2), as it serves as a model for analysing the relationship between dress and the self. Unlike the projects discussed earlier, however, Muggleton does not place his analysis of the self in dialogue with an analysis of structuring determinants, such as discourse, and fails to take account of gender. Instead, he uses this interview data to explore whether the theories of postmodernism circulating within scholarly discourses throughout the 1990s can be verified empirically: 'to show how members of youth subcultures interpret and make sense of the postmodern characteristics imputed to them by social theorists' (Muggleton 2000: 5). In short, in drawing attention to the individual experiences and attitudes of living subculturalists, Muggleton (2000) explores whether the subcultural self is experienced as a postmodern self – a self that is produced through, 'fragments, flux and an endless process of self-creation' (Elliot 2001: 131).

Muggleton (2000) finds that the subculturalists he interviewed did, indeed, move through styles; however, this process was gradual and thus did not threaten the subculturalists' coherent sense of self. According to Muggleton,

Appearance is not, as postmodern theory suggests, composed of free-floating signifiers, but appears to be constructed according to socially acquired tastes and preferences...while style is, indeed, something you put on, it is also regarded as 'part of you' (2000: 92-93).

He continues later that ‘style is viewed as an expression of one’s inner self’ (2000: 103) – an argument that echoes Richard Sennett’s (2002 [1977]) work on the ‘authentic’ self, which is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. In contrast to Polhemus’s theorizations, distance from the ‘mainstream’ continues to matter to these subcultural participants of the 1990s; however, significantly, for Muggleton, this distance is not linked to class-based ‘resistance’, but rather is a marker of individual authenticity and selfhood.

Andy Bennett (1999) positions his work in opposition to Polhemus’s (1994a, 1994b, 1996, 1998) and Muggleton’s (1998, 2000) work on postmodern style, arguing that changes in youth cultural activity have ‘rather more to do with the sheer range of consumer choices which now exist than with the onset of a postmodernist age and attendant postmodern sensibilities’ (Bennett 1999: 607). He relies upon David Chaney’s (1996) concept of ‘lifestyle’ to frame his investigation of style.

‘Lifestyle’ describes the sensibilities employed by the individual in choosing certain commodities and patterns of consumption and in articulating these cultural resources as modes of personal expression. [...] In this way, a lifestyle is ‘a freely chosen game’ (Bennett 1999: 607).

He describes post-subcultural activity as an individual project ‘of personal expression’ in which freely acting youth cultural participants pick and choose from a plethora of existing styles (Bennett 1999). Moreover, Bennett suggests that this post-subcultural appropriation of existing styles represents a transformation of meaning of these styles. In a discussion of popular music, he writes, ‘the individual is free to choose, not only between various music styles and attendant visual images, but also how such choices are lived out and what they are made to stand for’ (Bennett 1999: 614).

Bennett’s (1999) work resembles Paul Willis’s (1990) argument in *Common Culture*. Willis (1990) explores the possibility of creative consumption, championing the active agency of young people. In relation to fashion, he writes,

But young people don’t just buy passively or uncritically. They always transform the meaning of bought goods, appropriating and recontextualizing mass-market styles. [...] Most young people combine elements of clothing to create new meanings...They make their own sense of what is commercially available, make their own aesthetic judgements, and sometimes reject the normative definitions and categories of ‘fashion’ promoted by the clothing industry (1990: 85).

John Storey (2006b) is critical of Willis’s conception of the creativity of young people, however. He suggests that Willis’s (1990) work is part of an ‘uncritical drift’ within recent cultural studies research, wherein “‘resistance’ is endlessly elaborated in terms of

empowerment and pleasure, while “incorporation” is quietly forgotten’ (Storey 2006b: xix). It could be argued that Polhemus (1994a, 1994b, 1996, 1998) and Bennett (1999) as well can be identified as part of this ‘uncritical drift’ in cultural studies. In focusing on the possibilities for individual creativity in the ‘supermarket of style’ (Polhemus) or within consumer culture (Bennett and Willis), these theorists celebrate the agency of youth cultural participants without considering the structuring effects the fashion and consumer industries might have on youth cultural practices of consumption and dress.

The post-subcultural work on style forms a useful backdrop to this thesis, as it explores the creation of identities *after* subculture, *after* working-class resistance. Yet a formulation of youth cultural activity as the potential for creativity and endless re-invention is unhelpful within an analysis of contemporary indie, as the boundaries between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ are constantly being redrawn, as Chapters Four through Seven show. Like in these other post-subcultural reformulations of style, contemporary indie is interwoven into the wider cultural formation of popular fashion in the UK – what Barker (2008: 428) calls, “‘the whale’ of postmodern consumer capitalism’. However, unlike the above-mentioned theorists, this thesis attempts to problematize this blurring.

2.3. Redrafting the boundaries around youth culture

Whereas the scholars discussed in the preceding sub-section responded to subcultural theory by reconsidering style after resistance, other post-subcultural theorists have responded to this body of work by reconsidering the ways in which boundaries around youth cultural formations emerge (Bennett 1999, 2000; Thornton 1995; Stahl 2004). The work of these theorists creates tools through which to consider youth cultural formations as fluid and shifting, as emerging from different locations, sites and spaces – characteristics that are drawn into this thesis’s understanding of contemporary indie.

Bennett (1999) contends that ‘neo-tribe’ should replace ‘subculture’ as the descriptive term used for youth cultural groups. Neo-tribes are ‘without the rigidity of the forms of organization with which we are familiar’, without the rigidly defined external boundaries of subcultures (Maffesoli in Bennett 1999: 605). Instead, neo-tribes have porous boundaries, allowing individuals to come and go as they please; ‘neo-tribalism is characterized by fluidity, occasional gatherings and dispersal’ (Maffesoli 1996: 76). They emerge at certain points in time, only to later disappear.

Elsewhere, Bennett (2000) brings theoretical attention to the importance of geographical location for youth cultural research by arguing that the appropriation of music and styles is determined via the context of the ‘local’. He writes, ‘local appropriations of musical and stylistic resources involve inscriptions of meaning that are

inextricably bound up with local experience' (2000: 1; emphasis added). That is, the way one experiences music and style is determined by that person's location and surroundings. Bennett continues that the 'local' can be determined at the national level, or a city, town or village could play the part of the 'local' (2000: 2). Alternatively, the 'local' can be found within cities and regions as well; a specific part of town or a particular club, for example, could serve as the 'local' (2000: 2). Although the exact space which constitutes the 'local' is undefined in Bennett's theorization, the key point of Bennett's argument is that youth cultural activity not only occurs within a specific location, but that this location informs the activity, as well.

The post-subcultural theorization of 'scene' as a replacement to subculture represents a further attempt by recent post-subcultural researchers to bring attention to the importance of space for subcultural activity. The space of scenes

[...] may be both local and trans-local phenomena, a cultural space that may orientate as much around stylistic and/or musicalized association as face-to-face contact in a venue, club or other urban setting (Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004b: 14).

That is, the space of cultural activity may be material (like in a venue) or abstract, like the 'many-layered circuits, loose affiliations, networks, contexts and points of contact' (websites, fanzines and computer social media, for example) that serve as non-material locations for social interaction based on shared interests (Stahl 2004: 52). In short, a scene is a material or non-material space that fosters collective cultural activity. Thus far, post-subcultural researchers have applied the concept of scene most readily to music cultures, highlighting the interlocking points of connection and communication within the chains of musical production and consumption (Stahl 2004); however, the concept can also be drawn into analysis of dress.

The three concepts discussed thus far – 'neo-tribe', the 'local' and 'scene' – are all important when considering the way in which contemporary indie emerges as a space for social interaction. As is outlined further in Chapter Three, I conducted ethnographic research at specific sites and spaces that can be related to these concepts. For example, I conducted the bulk of the ethnographic research at festivals, which (as I argue in Chapter Six) can be understood as spaces that foster the emergence of 'neo-tribes' related to indie music and dress practices. I also conducted interviews and observation outside of second-hand stores in East London – stores that can be considered material spaces of interaction related to the 'scene' surrounding indie dress practices. Finally, that most of my research was conducted in London points to the significance of the 'local' for the youth cultural formation under investigation. These concepts are useful tools for thinking about the

nature of youth cultural formations *after* subculture and thus have guided my thinking in relation to contemporary indie. However, whereas the above-mentioned concepts draw attention to youth culture as a site for social interaction, it also is possible to consider youth culture as a discursively constituted space. As discourses are multiple and shifting, moreover, it could be argued that discourse provides another tool through which to consider the fluidity of youth cultural formations *after* subculture. Although this thesis considers the way in which indie creates a material space for the construction of identities, for the most part it understands indie to be a youth cultural formation formed *through discourse*: in other words, a discursively constituted space in which subjectivities emerge.

Sarah Thornton's (1995) work on the media representation of subculture provides a foundation from which this analysis of the discursive construction of indie is staged. Pre-dating Thornton, Stanley Cohen (2002 [1972]) explores the discursive construction of subculture within the media. Specifically, he looks at mass media representations of the altercations between the Mods and the Rockers in Brighton in the mid-1960s, and he argues that the way in which those events were reported worked to produce the members of the subcultural groups as 'folk devils' – a characterization that would assure that their subsequent activities were understood through the lens of deviance. Thornton is critical of this work, arguing

Contrary to youth subcultural ideologies, 'subcultures' do not germinate from a seed and grow by force of their own energy into mysterious 'movements' only to be belatedly digested by the media. Rather, media and other culture industries are there and effective right from the start. They are central to the process of subcultural formation (1995: 117).

She pinpoints three types of media that are used within subcultural creation: micromedia, niche media and mass media (1995: 116-117). Mass media create a particular subversive image for a group, as negative representations of the group and its activities appearing in the mass media work to distinguish the group from the 'mainstream'. According to Thornton, 'mass media "misunderstanding" is often an objective of certain subcultural industries, rather than an accident of youth's cultural pursuits. "Moral panic" can therefore be seen as a form of hype' (1995: 136). Arguing against Cohen's (2002 [1972]) reading of the mass media, she continues, 'derogatory media coverage is not the verdict but the essence of their resistance' (1995: 137).

In contrast, micromedia, such as flyers, serve to bring a group together: 'Micro-media are essential mediators amongst the participants in subcultures' (Thornton 1995: 151). She explains further, 'They rely on their readers/listeners/consumers to be "in the

know” or in the “right place at the right time” and are actively involved in the social organization of youth’ (1995: 151). Finally, niche media, such as the style and music press, help to develop the self-consciousness of the group (1995: 116-117). Thornton explains,

They categorize social groups, arrange sounds, itemize attire and label everything. They baptize scenes and generate the self-consciousness required to maintain cultural distinctions. They give definition to vague cultural formations, pull together and reify the disparate materials which become subcultural homologues. The music and style press are crucial to our conceptions of British youth; they do not just cover subcultures, they help construct them (Thornton 1995: 151).

Thornton’s work points attention to the way in which media representation of subcultures is *productive*. Although Thornton does not engage with Foucault’s concept of discourse, it is useful for understanding her arguments, as Evans (1997) suggests. The present thesis draws on Thornton (1995) and Evans’s (1997) work, considering the discursive production of subculture; however, it problematizes the divide Thornton creates between mass media and niche media. The thesis shows that such a divide is not useful within an analysis of the discursive construction of indie. Contemporary indie is produced across a range of popular fashion and music media sources. The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate this diversity – this blurring – that works to produce contemporary indie and to problematize the way in which identities form within it.

Chapter Two

Theoretical framework: Discourse, 'practices of the self', gender, field

This thesis takes a Foucauldian approach to the analysis of identity. Drawing on Foucault's concepts 'discourse' (2002) and 'practices of the self' (1985, 2000b), it considers the way in which discursive representations of indie create possibilities for the formation of subjectivities, and it questions to what extent people inhabit these subject positions as they engage in 'practices of the self'. There are limitations in Foucault's work that are of significance to this thesis, however. Foucault has been criticized for neglecting gender within his formulation of 'practices of the self' (McNay 1994; Elliot 2001) – a criticism that is relevant to this thesis, as gender is a major point of problematization in relation to indie. To address gender, the thesis places Foucault's 'practices of the self' in dialogue with other sociological concepts that can account for gender: discipline (Foucault 1977), performativity (Butler 1999 [1990]), 'presentation of the self' (Goffman 1959) and the 'authentic' self (Finkelstein 1991; Sennett 2002 [1977]). Further, Bourdieu (1993a: 33) has criticized Foucault's conception of discourse, arguing that the latter 'refuses to relate works in any way to their social conditions of production, i.e. to positions occupied within the field of cultural production'. Bourdieu's criticism is significant to this thesis because, as contemporary indie is produced across music and fashion, the discourses that produce it are varied and diverse. In order to account for the diversity of 'voices' that work to produce indie, the thesis draws on Bourdieu's (1993a, 1993b) concept of field and Rocamora's (2001a, 2001b, 2002) extension of this concept to research on popular fashion.

1. Discourse

Following Foucault (2002), this research considers discourse to be productive of objects, ideas, subjects and, crucially, subject positions.

1.1. Discourse as language that is constitutive

Discourse is language in that it is made up of a variety of written and spoken statements. Foucault suggests that all discursive statements existing at a given historical moment can be considered to be 'a population of events in the space of discourse in general' (2002: 29). He calls this space the 'field of discursive events', and he places the statements that exist

within this field under analysis. In this way, Foucault's project is historicized. His field of discursive events is a synchronic structure. Thus, although he is analyzing language, the analysis of discourse differs radically from linguistic analysis. Foucault is not concerned with studying the rules of language and how they might persist over time: essentially, how to develop a sentence from a variety of potential components. He is interested in studying the statements that exist at a given moment and how these statements constitute historically specific truths.

The term 'constitute' is significant. It distinguishes the analysis of discourse from another prevalent form of analysis that takes language as its base: semiotic analysis (see Hall 1997b, 1997c). Foucault claims to be unconcerned with, what he calls, 'words and things' (2002: 54): that is, signs (words) that are meant to signify pre-existing objects (things). Instead, he writes,

I would like to show with precise examples that in analyzing discourses themselves, one sees the loosening of the embrace, apparently so tight of words and things, and the emergence of a group of rules proper to discursive practice. [...] A task that consists not – of no longer – treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representation) but as *practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak* (2002: 54; emphasis added).

As Hall (1997c) notes, Foucault's focus on discourse as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' poses a radical re-conceptualization of the nature of 'things': that 'things' do not exist outside of discourse. Hall (1997c: 44-5) specifies, 'Foucault does *not* deny that things can have a real, material existence in the world. What he does argue is that "*nothing has any meaning outside of discourse*"' (emphasis in original). In short, discourse constitutes objects insofar as it gives them meaning.

Foucault extends this argument to concepts and disciplines, as well, calling the latter 'strategies'. It is in relation to concepts and disciplines that thought and meaning are organized. However, these structures for organizing thought do not exist outside of discourse, waiting to be applied to it. Instead, like objects, concepts and disciplines are constituted within discourse. Foucault insists that there is nothing anterior to discourse, which then shapes what can be said. Instead, discourse is 'a group of *rules* that are immanent in a practice' (2002: 51; emphasis in original): that is, a set of rules that determines what can be spoken and how it can be spoken. Discourse, itself, determines how meaning is formed in relation to objects, through the use of concepts and in line with disciplines/bodies of knowledge.

Foucault extends his argument about the productive power of discourse further. Not only are there no objects existing anterior to discourse, nor are there pre-existent

concepts and strategies for organizing discourse, but even the subject is constituted within discourse. It is in relation to this re-formulation of the subject that Foucault's work stands in opposition to the active, knowing Enlightenment individual (see Hall 1997c: 55).

Foucault writes,

Thus conceived, discourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject, but, [...] it must now be recognized that it is neither by recourse to a transcendental subject nor by recourse to a psychological subjectivity that the regulation of its enunciations should be defined (2002: 60-61).

Instead, discourse 'is a space of exteriority in which a network of distinct sites is deployed' (2002: 60). This term 'network of distinct sites' is significant because it brings attention to the fact that, for Foucault, discourse creates *positions*, which the subject can inhabit and from which s/he can speak: positions 'from which [a discourse's] particular knowledge and meaning most makes sense' (Hall 1997c: 56). In other words, in inhabiting a certain discursively constituted subject position, a person internalizes the knowledge or 'truth' of that discourse, understanding him/herself according to the rules and regularities of that discourse.

The concept of discourse stands at the centre of analysis in Chapters Four and Five. Chapter Four charts the developments in indie through an analysis of the shift in the way it was represented. Chapter Five presents analyses of the ideas and objects produced within contemporary indie representations appearing across the popular fashion and music media: for example, indie 'authenticity', 'style' and 'the street'. Chapter Five also examines how certain positions for the subject are constituted within contemporary indie representations, inviting potential subjects of its discourse to inhabit these positions. Crucially, the subject positions created within contemporary indie representations are historicized. Contemporary indie subjectivity differs from that of indie in the 1980s and 1990s.

Hall suggests, however, Foucault's work on discourse '[reveals] little about why it is that certain individuals occupy some subject positions rather than others' (1996: 10). He notes further that Foucault, himself, attempted to overcome this issue through a switch from the archaeological method of studying discourse to a genealogical method of studying the effects of power/knowledge on human beings (1996: 10-11).

1.2. Power/knowledge and the body

Like discourse, the concept power/knowledge refers to historically specific forms of rationality that form outside of and work to produce the subject.

In short, it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge (Foucault 1977: 28).

Through power/knowledge, Foucault is able to consider how historically specific forms of knowledge intersect with the body and the institutions that regulate and control it. He writes, 'Everything which functions in a society as a system of constraint and which isn't an utterance, in short, all the field of the non-discursive social, is an institution' (1980: 197-198). According to Foucault, institutions manifest themselves as hospitals, schools and prisons. These institutions dominate the problematic bodies that reside within them – the sick, students or prisoners – through the organization of their daily routines.

Such institutional control over the activities of their inhabitants is possible because of the Panopticon – the central mechanism for the implementation of non-sovereign power. The Panopticon is a 'pure architectural and optical system' (1977: 205). It consists of a watchtower, which, by standing in the centre of the prison, hospital or school, is visible to all occupants. At any moment, an overseer could be in the watchtower, observing the inhabitants of the institution; however, these inhabitants cannot see into the watchtower to note the overseer's presence. Thus, the two characteristics of the Panopticon emerge: visibility and unverifiability.

Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so (1977: 201).

In short, Foucault describes 'the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power' (1977: 201). Under the threat of being watched, the inmate (or patient or student) begins to regulate him/herself. Thus, the end product of the Panopticon's power is the regulation of human bodies and bodily activity. Human beings are subjects of 'technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends of domination, an objectivising of the subject' (1988: 18). In short, human beings are made into subjects by being turned into docile bodies, controlled and regulated by non-sovereign, disciplinary power.

According to Entwistle, Foucault's theorization of the body is relevant to an analysis of dress because dress is inextricably connected to 'the living, breathing, moving body it adorns' (2000: 9). She continues,

[Foucault's] account of the body as an object shaped by culture has never been applied specifically to dress but is of considerable relevance for understanding fashion and dress as important sites for discourses on the body (Entwistle 2000: 16).

Furthermore, Entwistle argues that Foucault's work on discourse is useful when considering 'commonsense understandings about modern dress' (2000: 20) and 'the way in which the body acquires meaning and is acted upon by social and discursive forces and how these forces are implicated in the operation of power' (2000: 21). As is discussed in greater detail in the following sub-section, Entwistle (1997) explores this process in her work, in which she examines discourses on power-dressing that are aimed at professional women.

Entwistle's (1997) work is significant, moreover, because it brings attention to a blurring of the boundary between the body and the self in relation to dress. In relation to her empirical interviews, she found that 'The women attend to their bodies as the vehicle of the self, as the place upon which to construct their identity' (1997: 295). She argues later, dress

is an intimate aspect of the experience and presentation of the self and is so closely linked to the identity that these three – dress, the body and the self – are not perceived separately, but simultaneously, as a totality (2000: 10).

This blurring between the body and the self brings attention to the fact that, not only Foucault's work on disciplinary power, but also his work on 'practices of the self', can be drawn on within an analysis of dress.

2. 'Practices of the self'

It is Foucault's concept 'practices of the self' that is drawn on within this analysis of the formation of subjectivity within contemporary indie. As is shown in this section, the concept allows for a more fluid means of connecting discourse to practice than 'discipline'. As Hall (1996: 13) explains, with 'practices of the self'

There is certainly no single switch to 'agency', to intention and volition [...] But there is the *production* of self as an object in the world, the practices of self-constitution, recognition and reflection (emphasis in original).

This point of *producing the self* is of importance not only to an analysis of indie, but also to an analysis of youth cultural identities, more generally. Youth cultural identities are elective identities – a point that underscores all research on youth culture. Of course, such

identities are informed by other aspects of identity, such as class (Hall and Jefferson 1993 [1976]; Murdock and McCron 1993 [1976]), gender (Brill 2007; McRobbie and Garber 1993 [1976]) and ethnicity (Hebdige 1979; Huq 2006); however, there remains an element of choice, of agency. By framing analysis through Foucault's theories, this thesis explores the way in which this 'choice' occurs *within discourse*.

The development of Foucault's thinking beyond 'docile bodies' and 'disciplinary power' towards a consideration of the self is tightly linked to his *History of Sexuality* project. In the introduction to *The Use of Pleasure* (1985) – the second volume in the *History of Sexuality* series – Foucault describes his original intention with the project: to analyse how the subject speaks truthfully about him/herself as a subject of sexuality (1985: 6). As such, the present project falls in line with Foucault's previous work on discourse, disciplinary power and subjectivation (1977, 1980, 2002). However, within his project on sexuality, Foucault's thought diverged greatly from that within his past work. Specifically, he began to theorize a subject of knowledge who is active in his/her own self-creation. In other words, Foucault developed the concept 'practices of the self' to analyse a mode of subjectivation that is enacted when a person actively engages with and works upon him/herself.

That 'practices of the self' is a mode of subjectivation points to the fact that it is a process that develops within discourse. In the essay 'Structuralism and Post-structuralism', Foucault writes, his work on 'practices of the self'

[...] is an analysis of the relation between forms of reflexivity – a relation of self to self – and, hence, of relations between forms of reflexivity and the discourse of truth, forms of rationality and effects of knowledge [*connaissance*] (2000a: 444).

Similarly, in the essay 'Ethics of the Concern for the Self as a Practice of Freedom', Foucault brings attention to one of the means through which the connection between one's 'relations with oneself' and discourse manifests: through models for practice. He writes,

I would say that if I am now interested in how the subject constitutes itself in an active fashion through practices of the self, these practices are nevertheless not something invented by the individual himself. They are models that he finds in his culture and are proposed, suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society, and his social group (Foucault 2000b: 291).

This point is significant in that it suggests a starting point through which one can apply the concept of 'practices of the self' within empirical analysis. That is, one can look for 'models for practice' emerging within sites of discursive production and relate these models to the practices in which people engage. As discussed in the preceding chapter, Nixon (1996,

1997) introduces this methodological point in his analysis of the regime of 'new man' representations. Similarly, it was discussed that Entwistle (1997) uses the concept to build an analysis of a discourse on 'power dressing', suggesting that 'dress for success' manuals implore women to create themselves. As Nixon and Entwistle show, 'practices of the self' is a useful concept to frame an analysis of representations: to consider how such representations create subject positions by suggesting ways of engaging with the self.

The concept 'practices of the self' can be used to frame an analysis of the practices of constructing the self, moreover. The concept is based on the wider theme of, what Foucault calls, the 'aesthetics of existence' or 'arts of existence'. He defines the 'arts of existence' as

[...] those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria (1985: 10-11).

'Practices of the self' are thus aesthetic practices: 'a creative activity' (2000b: 262).

Moreover, the underlying intention of such practices is 'the idea of a self that had to be created as a work of art' (2000b: 271). In short, it is the idea that 'the subject constitutes itself in an active fashion' (Foucault 2000b: 291). Thus, it is possible to use the concept not only to stage an analysis of the interplay between discourse and the self, but also to frame an analysis of the specific practices in which people engage in order to produce themselves. Significantly, these practices can be both physical acts (such as dress practices) *and* acts of self-representation.

In the essay 'Self Writing' (2000b), Foucault extends the definition of 'practices of the self' to include, alongside physical acts, the ways in which a person shapes his/her ideas about him/herself. In this essay, Foucault argues that the concept 'practices of the self' refers to 'work not just on actions but, more precisely, on thought' (2000b: 208). According to Foucault, the self cannot be formed without *askesis* – that is, 'a training of the self by oneself' (2000b: 208). Alongside the repetition of certain physical acts, writing, for Foucault, is one of the means through which this *askesis* is undertaken. In other words, it is through the self-reflective practice of writing about the self that a certain version of the self is produced. Moreover, Foucault argues, writing facilitates 'the fashioning of accepted discourses, recognized as true, into rational principles of action' (2000b: 209). That is, writing is one of the means through which a person inhabits discursively constituted subject positions by internalizing certain historically specific truths. Writing, then, is an example par excellence of a 'practice of the self' because it is an act in which a person

engages in order to create him/herself as a certain type of person *and* an act through which that same person internalizes historically specific discourses, incorporating these 'truths' into his/her own conceptions of the self.

As discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, the present empirical research project yielded not only textual data from the collection of media representations of indie, but also ethnographic data from participant observation and from interviews with people dressed in indie-look ensembles. Chapter Six uses 'practices of the self' to frame this analysis of the ethnographic data. I observed practices of dress and practices of looking at others; however, the respondents also told me about themselves. Drawing on Foucault's (2000b) work on 'self-writing', I consider the way in which, within interviews, the respondents are constructing the self through their words. Although self-writing and interviewing differ, they similarly serve as means through which to externalize verbally a version of the self for the benefit of another. In the case of 'self-writing', the act

[...] palliates the dangers of solitude; it offers what one has done or thought to a possible gaze; the fact of obliging oneself to write plays the role of a companion by giving rise to the fear of disapproval and to shame (Foucault 2000b: 207).

In the case of the interviewing, my own position as the researcher offered a potential gaze, a potential judgment. Thus, 'practices of the self' serves within this thesis both as a tool through which to build a connection between representations of indie and practice, *and* as a framework through which to analyse the construction of the self through dress practices and strategies of self-representation.

3. The issue of gender

Although Foucault's work on 'practices of the self' is a useful starting point for an analysis of the acts of self-construction, there are gaps within his work, specifically in relation to gender. Although his focus in the final stage of his career is on the constitution of sexuality, Foucault does not integrate a discussion of gender into this analysis (Elliot 2001: 94; see also McNay 1994). Thus, Meghan Morris suggests, 'Any feminist drawn into sending love letters to Foucault would be in no danger of reciprocation. Foucault's work is not the work of a ladies' man' (cited in Elliot 2001: 94). A similar criticism can be made of Foucault's earlier work on disciplinary power; however, feminist scholars have shown how the concepts of discipline and docile bodies can be drawn into an analysis of the subjugation of women within society (Bartky 1990; Bordo 1993; and Entwistle 2000 on dress).

This thesis uses the work of several other theorists – Erving Goffman (1959),

Judith Butler (1999 [1990]), Richard Sennett (2002 [1977]) and Joanne Finkelstein (1991) – to introduce gender into analysis. What Goffman and Butler's work share with Foucault's 'practices of the self' is an attention to the way in which the self is produced in relation to discourse *and* through the practices in which a person engages. Finkelstein and Sennett's work coheres with Foucault's in that the notion of the 'authentic' self, which the former two theorists discuss, can be interpreted to be a discursive model for practice.

The notion of 'performance' is central to Goffman's (1959) work on the 'presentation of self in everyday life'. According to Goffman, whenever a person enters into an interaction with others, s/he engages in a performance. 'A "performance" may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants' (1959: 14). That is, a performance is the means through which an individual creates an impression of him/herself when in the presence of others. Goffman continues that, within these performances, a person relies upon a 'front': that is, 'expressive equipment' that is drawn upon in order to help produce the impression s/he wants to create (1959: 19). He divides 'front' into 'setting' – furniture and other background items (1959: 19) – and 'personal front'. He defines the latter as

[...] the items that we most intimately identify with the performer himself and that we naturally expect will follow the performer wherever he goes [...]: insignia of office or rank; clothing; sex, age, and racial characteristics; size and looks; posture; speech patterns; facial expressions; bodily gestures' and the like (1959: 21).

Crucially, Goffman's work draws attention to the way in which a person can use clothing in order to create a certain impression of him/herself.

Goffman (1959) continues, the individual is divided into two parts: 'a *performer*, a harried fabricator of impressions involved in the all-too-human task of staging a performance' and 'a *character*, a figure, typically a fine one, whose spirit, strength, and other sterling qualities the performance was designed to evoke' (1959: 222; emphasis in original). Whereas the former is understood to be the actor, working to stage a particular performance, it is the latter that Goffman equates with the 'self'. The character – the self – created through a performance is the impression that an individual wants to give of him/herself to others. The self that is created varies from situation to situation. Moreover, it is as much the product of the situation itself as it is the product of the actor's intentions. Goffman writes, 'this self itself does not derive from its possessor, but from the whole scene of his action' (1959: 223). For Goffman, there is no 'inner' or true self, but rather a multiplicity of context-dependent selves.

It is possible to draw on Goffman's (1959) work when problematizing the way in

which the self is constituted in relation to gendered discourse. Goffman argues that one of the ways in which a 'performance is "socialized"' (1959: 30) is when the performer '[tends] to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society' (1959: 31). He gives the example of female college students who 'play down their intelligence, skills, and determinativeness when in the presence of datable boys' (1959: 34). Goffman explains,

These performers are reported to allow their boy friends to explain things to them tediously that they already know; they conceal proficiency in mathematics from their less able consorts; they lose ping-pong games just before the ending. [...] Through all of this the natural superiority of the male is demonstrated, and the weaker role of the female affirmed (1959: 34).

That is, through the way in which they engage in the 'presentation of self', these female students actively work to re-affirm stereotypical discourses on femininity as 'flighty' or 'stupid'. For Goffman, these young women know what is expected of them and they demonstrate a desire to meet these expectations in order to meet the social requirements of a specific performance.

Through her work on 'performativity', Butler (1999 [1990]) problematizes the relationship between discursive regularities and the production of the gendered self. She deconstructs the notion of gender – something that 'we take to be an "internal" feature of ourselves' (1999 [1990]: xv). Against this notion, Butler argues that gender is not some inner essence that is then expressed through practice. Instead, she argues that practices are constitutive of gender. She writes,

...acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality (1999 [1990]: 173; emphasis in original).

The concept of gender performativity radically challenges the assumption of a 'primary or stable identity', the assumption of a 'psychological "core"' (Butler 1999 [1990]: 174).

Gender identity is produced through performative practices – practices that can include practices of dress.

Butler's 'performativity' resembles Goffman's 'presentation of the self' to an extent. That is, the two theorists similarly deny the existence of an essential or 'inner' self, arguing instead that the self is produced when a person engages in specific practices – a point that is also central to Foucault's 'practices of the self'. However, one main difference between Goffman's and Butler's work is that for Goffman there is no inner self, whereas for Butler

there is, in its place, the *illusion* of an inner self: specifically, the illusion of a gendered self. Butler (1999 [1990]) argues that, although there is no inner essence, we experience gender identity *as if it were* a manifestation of some inner self.

In other words, acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause' (1999 [1990]: 173; emphasis in original).

She writes, the true 'organizing principle of identity' is, in fact, a system of socially instituted 'normative gender presumptions' (1999 [1990]: xxii). In relation to this point, a second difference between the work of Goffman and Butler emerges. For Butler, gender is unconsciously reproduced, structured by 'political regulations and disciplinary practices' (1999 [1990]: 173-4), whereas for Goffman gender expectations are intentionally met. This is a significant point because, unlike Goffman and Foucault (in relation to his work on 'practices of the self'), for Butler, there is no agency within the production of the self.

Chapter Six of the present thesis places Goffman's and Butler's work in dialogue with Foucault's work on 'practices of the self'. Although Foucault's concept serves as the main theoretical tool through which the interview material is problematized, it is shown in the chapter how the act of creating the self involves intentionally engaging in gendered performances, and it is questioned to what extent the respondents performatively reproduce gendered norms. One of the most prominent gendered differences that emerged within the interview data was that the male respondents were much more likely to draw on the notion of an 'authentic' self within their strategies of self-representation. Thus, before moving on to a discussion of field, it is important to introduce the concept of the 'authentic' self through a discussion of the work of Sennett (2002 [1977]) and Finkelstein (1991), and to bring attention to how the 'authentic' self can be understood as a discourse, upon which respondents – specifically the male respondents – draw in their own 'practices of the self'.

Sennett (2002 [1977]) is concerned with the way in which private life has overtaken public life. He argues that in the 18th Century there were two separate domains of life – public and private – and that a person correspondingly had a public and a private self. According to Sennett, the public self was enacted through a process of 'playacting' – a means of interacting in public that in no way revealed the private self. He writes, 'to the extent a public geography exists, social *expression* will be conceived of *as presentation* to other people of feelings which signify in and of themselves, *rather than as representation* to other people of feeling present and real to each self' (2002 [1977]: 39; emphasis in

original). In this way, Sennett's concept of 'playacting' resembles Goffman's concept of the 'presentation of self', as the two concepts refer to the way in which a person develops a character when engaged in the process of social interaction. Sennett's work diverges from Goffman's, however. Whereas for Goffman there is no private realm, no inner self, but rather only the character developed and the actor working behind the scenes, Sennett suggests that there is a private realm that counters the public one. Sennett argues that within 'the modern present' this private realm has come to signify 'a reflection, that of what our psyches are, what is authentic in our feelings' (2002 [1977]: 4). He continues, 'the psyche is treated as though it has an inner life of its own' (2002 [1977]: 4) – a characteristic of contemporary society of which Sennett is critical. Moreover, according to Sennett, in the 19th Century, the private domain began to take precedence over the public domain and the private self came to dominate social interactions.

According to Sennett, because of sweeping societal changes that occurred as a result of the growth of capitalism and the changing nature of secularism, personality took on great importance in the 19th Century. Nineteenth century society became 'a collection of personalities' (2002 [1977]: 153), and clothing became the means through which personalities were demonstrated in public. Sennett explains the link between personality and appearance further,

[...] personality is seen to vary from person to person. [...] One is what one appears; therefore, people with different appearances are different persons. When one's own appearances change, there is a change in the self (2002 [1977]: 152).

Sennett continues, 'One really knew about a person by understanding him at the most concrete level – which consisted of details of clothes, speech, and behavior' (2002 [1977]: 153). In other words, appearances came to be understood as 'direct expressions of the "inner" self. That is, personality is immanent in appearances' (2002 [1977]: 153). In suggesting that this notion of the link between appearance and the 'inner' self emerged as a way of thinking about the self, Sennett is, in fact, talking about the emergence of a historically specific discourse – one that, he argues, has persisted for the past one-hundred-and-fifty years.

Finkelstein (1991) takes up Sennett's argument, suggesting that the present society is one that is marked by the 'knowledge' that personality is immanent in appearance. She argues that, within contemporary culture, there exists an 'authenticating narrative' of the self which 'tells us that we are in possession of a character, a personal identity, a putative reservoir of subjective experience merely because we act in the world' (1991: 9). She argues further that, although physiognomic theories linking personality to

appearance seem outdated, 'reading character from physical appearance is still common in contemporary society' (1991: 49). However, Finkelstein also identifies the present society as one in which the body is malleable. The body is shaped constantly within contemporary culture to meet prevailing norms of beauty. 'Clothes, diet, exercise, pharmaceuticals, drug therapy, micro-surgery, body implants and so on, are the means of producing the modern fashioned body' (1991: 5). Taking these two characteristics of contemporary society together, she argues that people engage in processes of altering their external appearance with the goal of producing a particular self. Finkelstein is critical of this linkage between external appearance and the inner self, suggesting instead that appearance is not a reflection of one's inner self, but rather is a reflection of contemporary fashion trends.

That the male respondents within this project took up a discourse of the 'authentic' self is interesting when placed in dialogue with Tseëlon's (1995) work on the feminine self. Tseëlon addresses 'mythological and theological descriptions which define the essence of the woman as dissimulation' (1995: 33-34) as well as 'psychoanalytic accounts and contemporary social theory which define the "essence" of femininity as an inessential social construction' (1995: 34), arguing that the two radically different theoretical traditions similarly identify a woman's essence as 'non-essence' (1995: 34). Within the former tradition, woman's essence is linked to appearance; however, appearance is denounced as artifice, and thus woman's essence is equated with artifice. Within the latter tradition, woman has no underlying essence, but rather her essence is produced through masquerade. Tseëlon attempts to explore these theorizations of woman's essence through an empirical research project focusing on the ways in which women (who have answered a questionnaire of Tseëlon's devising) understand the self. She asks, 'if the woman is considered as artifice and fake, is it the case that she hides her real essence, or is she only a series of masks with no essence?' (1995: 39). In analysing her empirical data, Tseëlon finds that the women she surveyed presented multiple 'selves' through their dress; however, she argues that this act of putting on multiple faces is not insincere. That is, it is not an attempt by women to present false images of themselves. Rather, understood through Goffman's dramaturgy, this act is an investment – however minor – in a certain version of the self. Like Tseëlon's work, Chapter Six of this thesis shows how the female respondents understand themselves as moving through different looks and different selves. In short, this thesis explores gendered differences in subjectivity and experience.

4. Field

Thus far, this chapter has introduced the theoretical tools that are used in this thesis to explore how contemporary indie is discursively constituted, how contemporary indie creates a space for the production of subjectivity, how subjectivity within indie is produced not only in relation to discourse, but also through individual practice and, finally, how gender is implicated within the production of the self within indie. What the theoretical tools discussed so far cannot account for is the way in which contemporary indie is produced across music *and* fashion. The discourse that produces indie is not a unified discourse, but rather is made up of a range of different ‘voices’. Accordingly, this thesis uses Bourdieu’s (1993a, 1993b) concept field as a theoretical tool, through which to root the emergence of discourses producing indie ‘to their social conditions of production’ (Bourdieu 1993a: 33).

4.1. *Fields of cultural production*

Bourdieu (1993a) develops the concept ‘field’ to frame a radical rethinking of cultural production in relation to the arts and literature. He is critical of the way in which individual artists and authors are identified as, and celebrated for being, the creators of certain works. His goal is to stymie, what he calls, ‘the glorification of “great individuals”’ (1993a: 29) and to focus instead on the wider field in which cultural production takes place. Bourdieu argues that it is not a single producer who gives an object – a piece of artwork, for example – its value. Instead, ‘...the essential explanation of each work lies out side of each of them, in the objective relations which constitute this field’ (1993a: 30). In other words, he writes,

[...] it is a question of understanding works of art as a *manifestation* of the field as a whole, in which all the powers of the field, and all the determinisms inherent in its structure and functioning, are concentrated (1993a: 37; emphasis in original).

In an essay entitled ‘Some Properties of Fields’, Bourdieu (1993b: 72) defines the concept:

Fields present themselves synchronically as structured spaces of positions (or posts) whose properties depend on their position within these spaces and which can be analysed independently of the characteristics of their occupants.

There are two components to this definition. First, positions within a field can be differentiated from their occupants. With this point, Bourdieu firmly draws attention away from the individual producers of works. These position-occupants – otherwise

known as social agents – can be ‘isolated individuals, groups or institutions’ (1993a: 29). Whoever or whatever they might be, they are significant only in that they inhabit certain positions. For Bourdieu, the importance of the field is linked to the positions themselves – a point that leads into the second component of the above-quoted definition. For Bourdieu, what is important is not merely that field positions exist, but that they exist in relation to one another. Bourdieu’s goal is to analyse the ‘structural relations’ (1993a: 29) between these ‘spaces of positions’ (1993b: 72). He argues, it is only by analysing positions through ‘*relational* thinking’ (1993a: 29; emphasis in original) that one can come to understand the significance of a certain position.

The positions of a given field are organized in relation to field-specific capital or ‘recognition’ within the field (1993a: 30). Each position within a field is linked to a certain amount of capital, and thus the amount of capital social agents within the field possess is wholly dependent upon the positions they occupy within the field. Some positions are dominant and possess a large amount of field-specific capital, whereas other positions are dominated and correspondingly possess little field-specific capital. However, the organization of the field – the relations between dominant and dominated positions – is never static or unchanging. Bourdieu describes a field as a ‘field of struggles’ in which

[...] the occupants of the different positions implement [strategies] in their struggles to defend or improve their positions (i.e. their position-takings), strategies which depend for their force and form on the position each agent occupies in the power relations [*rappports de force*] (1993a: 30).

He illustrates these ‘struggles’ most clearly in a discussion of the struggle between ‘newcomers’ and the ‘established figures’ within a given field (1993a: 53).

In an essay entitled ‘Haute Couture and Haute Culture’, Bourdieu (1993b) describes this particular struggle. He writes,

In a field (and this is the general law of fields), the occupiers of the dominant position, those who have the most specific capital, are opposed in a whole host of ways to the newcomers, the new entrants to the field, *parvenus* who do not possess much specific capital. The established figures have *conservation strategies*, aimed at deriving profit from progressively accumulated capital. The newcomers have *subversion strategies*, oriented towards an accumulation of specific capital which presupposes a more or less radical reversal of the table of values, a more or less revolutionary subversion of the principles of production and appreciation of the products and, by the same token, a devaluation of the capital of the established figures (1993b: 133; emphasis in original).

As the strategies of newcomers are to ‘[subvert] the principles of production and appreciation of the products’ and to ‘[devalue] the capital of the established figures’, it is

often the newcomers who effect changes in the organization of the field and the relations between field positions; ‘The fact remains that every new position, in asserting itself as such, determines a displacement of the whole structure’ (Bourdieu 1993a: 58). Thus, with the creation of new positions within the field, ‘the whole problem is transformed’, as the new position ‘modifies and displaces the universe of possible options’ (Bourdieu 1993a: 32) and recodes the nature of the capital specific to the field.

Returning to Bourdieu’s original problematic, the value of a work of art is understood to be deriving from the whole field of cultural production in that this value is created in relation to field-specific capital and field struggles. That is, the value of a work is dependent upon the amount of field-specific capital linked to the position from which it was produced, and the value of that work changes as that position gains or loses power within the field. ‘The meaning of a work (artistic, literary, philosophical, etc.) changes automatically with each change in the field within which it is situated for the spectator or reader’ (1993a: 30-31). Bourdieu’s points are significant to this thesis as they draw attention to the importance of paying attention to the position of indie within the fields of music and fashion when attempting to understand the meaning of indie at a given point in time (Chapters Four and Five).

4.2. Discursive (or symbolic) production within fields of cultural production

The value of a work/an object is not derived solely from the position from which it was produced, however. ‘The production of discourse (critical, historical, etc.) about the work of art is one of the conditions of production of the work’ (Bourdieu 1993a: 35). Bourdieu uses the term ‘symbolic production’ to refer to this process, and he argues that researchers must take into account this discursive work if one is to understand the meaning of the work/object. He writes,

[...] the sociology of art and literature has to take as its object not only the material production but also the symbolic production of the work, i.e. the production of the value of the work or, which amounts to the same thing, of belief in the value of the work. It therefore has to consider as contributing to production not only the direct producers of the work in its materiality (artist, writer, etc.) but also the producers of the meaning and value of the work – critics, publishers, gallery directors and the whole set of agents whose combined efforts produce consumers capable of knowing and recognizing the work of art as such (1993a: 37).

In bringing attention to the ‘producers of the meaning and value of the work’, Bourdieu introduces a second struggle for power within a field of cultural production: ‘a struggle for the monopoly of legitimate discourse about the work of art, and consequently in the production of the value of the work of art’ (1993a: 36).

Bourdieu identifies the act of producing legitimate discourse about a work an act of *consecration*. In consecrating a work, in producing discourse about that work, a social agent not only gives the work meaning, but establishes his/her/its own position within the field, as well. 'All critics declare not only their judgement of the work but also their claim to the right to talk about it and judge it' (1993a: 36). It is this power to consecrate – this right to speak about works – for which many social agents inhabiting a field of cultural production struggle.

For the author, the critic, the art dealer, the publisher or the theatre manager, the only legitimate accumulation consists in making a name for oneself, a known, recognized name, a capital of consecration implying a power to consecrate objects (with a trademark or signature) or persons (through publication, exhibition, etc.) and therefore to give value, and to appropriate the profits from this operation (1993a: 75).

This 'capital of consecration' imbues the work. However, Bourdieu notes that the right to produce discourse is not a power inherent to the social agents who exercise it. 'This "authority" [of consecration] is nothing other than "credit"' (1993a: 78). He continues,

The quasi-magical potency of the signature is nothing other than the power, bestowed on certain individuals, to mobilize the symbolic energy produced by the functioning of the whole field, i.e. the faith in the game and its stakes that is produced by the game itself (1993a: 81).

Not only is the capital of cultural producers produced through the structural organization of the field, but the capital of consecration of those social agents who produce discourse about works is similarly linked to the organization of power within the field. Thus, in Chapters Four and Five, not only do I ask what object/subject positions/ideas are produced within these representations of indie, I also ask who is producing these representations? What 'authority' or field-specific capital are they drawing upon in the production of such discourse? Crucially, the 'authority' that is drawn on within the construction of indie is one that has to do with *popular* culture as opposed to high culture.

4.3. *Fields of popular culture*

Rocamora (2002) develops a critical analysis of the limitations of Bourdieu's work on fields and, specifically, his work on the field of fashion in his essay 'Haute Couture and Haute Culture' (1993b). He argues that this field is just like all other fields. According to Bourdieu, all fields can be considered in relation to a general framework. They are organized according to struggles for specific capital internal to the field. Field players compete to be consecrated and to be able to consecrate others (see 'Some Properties of

Fields' (Bourdieu 1993b)). However, Rocamora (2002: 346) points out, 'It is not fashion he analyses but the subfield of restricted production and consumption of fashion, that is, high fashion'. She continues,

Bourdieu's failure to account for the growing role of mass fashion in the structuring of the field of fashion is an illustration of his failure to account for the role of mass culture in the structuring of the field of culture, a field which endlessly reproduces itself (2002: 347).

In her critical application of Bourdieu's work on the field of fashion, Rocamora (2002) brings attention to the field of *popular* fashion, focusing on symbolic production within this field. Here, she references her (2001a) work on the way in which *The Guardian's* discourse symbolically produces 'fashion as popular culture' (2002: 350), placing her analysis in dialogue with McRobbie's (1998) comment that fashion in the UK is a 'popular' thing (Rocamora 2001: 124; McRobbie 1998: 8). The present thesis draws on Rocamora's (2001a, 2001b, 2002) work on the field of fashion in the UK by considering this field as a field of *popular* culture.

Further, this thesis explores the way in which the field of popular fashion in the UK is linked to the sub-field of indie music. Through a discussion of the relationship between the field of fashion and that of art, Rocamora (2009) brings attention to the fact that different fields of cultural production can be mutually influential. She writes, 'Statements about fashion design in the field of fashion are informed by statements on the arts in the field of art' (2009: 58). At the same time, however, fields of cultural production also differentiate themselves from one another. Bourdieu makes this point in the essay 'Some Properties of Fields'. He writes,

A field – even the scientific field – defines itself by (among other things) defining specific stakes and interests, which are irreducible to the stakes and interests specific to other fields (you can't make a philosopher compete for the prizes that interest a geographer) (1993b: 72).

That each field is influenced by other fields of cultural production, on the one hand, and has its own system of values, on the other, bears significance in relation to understanding the *fields* of popular culture within which indie is produced. The values of the field of popular fashion at times coincide with and at other times contrast with the values of the sub-field of indie music. Chapter Four analyses the way in which indie objects and people were consecrated within the field of fashion, first by the alternative style press in the 1990s and then by the high fashion press and industry in the 2000s – a process that was celebrated by many working within indie, such as the weekly music magazine *New Musical*

Express (NME). However, Chapter Five analyses how those discourses emerging from the contemporary field of popular fashion and the contemporary sub-field of indie music contrast sharply with one another. Following on from this point, Chapter Six explores the ways in which some of the interview respondents take up these discordant discourses in their own 'practices of the self'.

4.4. A historicized *field of fashion*

Not only does this thesis draw on Bourdieu's concept of field and Rocamora's (2001a, 2001b) application of field to popular culture in order to situate the analysis of discourse in relation to the 'voices' that work to produce it, the thesis also draws on Foucault's concept of discourse in order to analyse the contemporary field of fashion. Within this empirical research project, I collected a variety of data about cultural producers within the field of fashion: specifically, the second-hand store Beyond Retro and the figure of the stylists. As is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, these data were unforeseen; I had no intention of exploring the wider field of popular fashion in the UK when beginning the project. However, as these data emerged, it seemed important to account for them: to analyse the organization and capitals of the field (Chapter Seven). Foucault's work is significant because it allows me to historicize this analysis of field.

As has already been noted, Bourdieu (1993a: 33) criticizes Foucault for '[refusing] to relate works in any way to their social conditions of production, i.e. to positions occupied within the field of cultural production'. Reciprocally, Foucault could criticize Bourdieu for neglecting to root the act of discursive production within a historically specific context. Rocamora (2002) explains that, although Bourdieu did most of his work on the field of fashion in the early 1970s, when 'Haute Couture et Haute Culture' was first published in *Questions de Sociologie* in 1980, he

[...] refers to his discussion of the field of fashion without commenting on the historical changes which have taken place since his first analysis of this field, changes which might have led him to revise or refine his theoretical framework (Rocamora 2002: 346-347).

In short, Bourdieu's work 'tends towards a trans-historical conceptual framework and analytic approach which partially obscures the specificity of epochs and types of society or culture' (Calhoun, cited in Rocamora 2002: 347). Rocamora (2009) introduces Foucault's concept of discourse into the analysis of the discourse produced within the field of fashion and, in so doing, introduces a means through which one can consider the historical specificities of the discourses circulating within this field. As Chapter Seven demonstrates, the field of fashion in the UK is one that is very much shaped by recent historical shifts:

most significantly, the increasing symbolic value of the notion of the 'alternative' since the 1980s.

The present study

This chapter has introduced the key theoretical tools through which the thesis stages an analysis of the construction of identity within contemporary indie. The Foucauldian concepts 'discourse' and 'practices of the self' are used to frame an analysis of the indie subjectivity: how it is constituted within historically specific discourses on indie and produced through acts of self-creation, including dress practices and acts of self-representation. Accordingly this thesis expands upon the work of Nixon (1996, 1997) and Entwistle (1997), drawing together two moments in Foucault's body of work. The thesis uses the work of Goffman (1959), Butler (1999 [1990]), Sennett (2002 [1977]) and Finkelstein (1991) to add to this analysis of indie subjectivity the dimension of gender. Finally, the thesis uses Bourdieu's (1993a, 1993b) concept of 'field' to locate contemporary indie within its 'social conditions of production' (Bourdieu 1993a: 33): that is, to explore the way in which it is constituted through the interconnections between indie music and contemporary fashion in the UK. In so doing, this thesis expands upon Rocamora's (2009) work concerning the compatibility of the Foucauldian concept discourse and the Bourdieuan concept field. Through this theoretical framework, the thesis presents a historicized account of the construction of identity within contemporary indie – a youth cultural formation that is constituted across music and fashion and is also a space for the construction of both masculinity and femininity.

Chapter Three

The empirical research project

This chapter introduces the empirical research project, conducted between May and October 2009. Two distinct empirical research methods were employed: textual analysis and the ethnographic methods of semi-structured interviewing and participant observation. This chapter explains these methods, drawing attention to their strengths and limitations. Here, I refer back to the theoretical framework presented in the preceding chapter, and I articulate how I have attempted to account empirically for the theoretical concepts of discourse, 'practices of the self' and field. A problem I faced when engaging in both parts of the empirical research project had to do with the question of *how* to analyse indie – a youth cultural formation whose boundaries have become blurred as it has integrated into popular fashion in the UK. Throughout the chapter, therefore, I reflect upon and offer potential solutions to this problem.

1. A historical context

Before providing more details on the two strands of the contemporary empirical research project, I would like to discuss a third trajectory of empirical research: the historical project. The starting point of this thesis was that indie is a youth cultural formation that is interwoven into the wider formation of popular fashion in the UK. However, as I began empirical research, exploring both representation and ethnographic data, it seemed relevant to provide a historical context to this research – one which addresses the question, how did indie become interwoven into popular fashion? In order to answer this question, I decided to chart indie's history from its emergence in the wake of punk in the early 1980s until the present. I chose to build this history through textual analysis, because finding potential interview respondents, through whose discussions I could build an oral history of indie, would be too large an undertaking for the scope of this research project. This section outlines this historical project, drawing attention to *which* cultural texts I used and *why* I chose them.

1.1. 1980s - 2001

As indie first came to prominence as a musical formation, I looked to music magazines as a source for data. Three weekly music magazines were circulating in the UK during the

1980s: *New Musical Express* (*NME*) (est. 1952), *Melody Maker* (1926-2000) and *Sounds* (1970-1991). Archival material for these three publications is available at the Colindale location of the British Library, and thus the magazines were accessible sources for data on indie's history. *NME*, in particular, proved to be a useful source for information on indie because the publication has aligned itself with indie since the early 1980s (Shuker 2008: 166). Moreover, it is the only one of the three music magazines listed above whose history covers the entirety of the evolution of indie from the early 1980s until the present. For these two reasons, *NME* was the resource that was most useful to my research on charting indie's history.

Indie's periods of growth and decline are clearly marked within *NME*'s pages. Three periods of growth within indie were in the years 1986-1987, 1992-1995 and 2001-2004. I focused my historical research on these periods – a method inspired by Sennett's (2002 [1977]) work. In order to chart the demise of public culture over the past several hundred years, Sennett (2002 [1977]) employed a method called 'postholing'. In the introduction to Sennett's *The Fall of Public Man*, Harvey Cox explains, 'i.e., sinking a shaft here and there in the turf he wants to cover, making no pretence of probing in the same depth everywhere' (Cox (2002 [1978]: xvii). Although there are obvious problems with this method – 'the charge of presenting only the evidence that is favorable to [one's] case' (Cox 2002 [1978]: xvii) – it is a useful method through which to chart a phenomenon, such as indie, as it progresses over time. In other words, it is a way of examining in depth key moments in indie's history in order to highlight significant changes in the way it is constituted at the intersections of music and fashion. As is discussed at the end of this section, following Carabine's (2001) work, I problematized the construction of indie at these key moments using a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis.

As 1986 and 1987 were important years for the formation of indie as a youth-oriented music scene, I also looked to the style press of the time, *i-D* and *The Face*, as these publications are known for celebrating youth and music cultures (Jobling 1999; Lynge-Jorlén 2009; Thornton 1995). I found that indie was ignored by these publications, even though, as scholars note, the publications were linked to youth and music cultures of the period – a point that is developed further in the following chapter. Here, it is important to note that this lack of coverage of indie by the style press points to the fact that there are little data about the indie look from this period, as the weekly music publications focused solely on issues having to do with sound and musical production. *Melody Maker* journalist Simon Reynolds's (1989) contribution to McRobbie's (1989a) *Zoot Suits and Second-hand Dresses* – 'Against Health and Efficiency: Independent Music in the 1980s' – serves as the only account of the indie look that was produced in the 1980s. That there is little material

about what indie actually looked like in the 1980s is significant methodologically because, as becomes clear within this chapter, the indie look was the central tool around which I collected data on contemporary indie.

As is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four, I found that with the emergence of Britpop in the mid-1990s, the youth style press began to feature articles on indie musicians, such as Brett Anderson from Suede and Jarvis Cocker from Pulp. Accordingly, my research on media representations of indie in the 1990s included the weekly music publications *NME* and *Melody Maker* and the style publications *i-D* (est. 1980), *The Face* (1980-2004) and *Dazed & Confused* (est. 1992). Archival materials of the style publications are available via the London College of Fashion and Central Saint Martins libraries. Roy Shuker (2008) defines the difference between weekly music magazines and the style press:

Melody Maker and *New Musical Express* (the 'inkies') have historically emphasized a tradition of critical rock journalism, with their reviewers acting as the gatekeepers for that tradition; and the 'style bibles' (*The Face*) emphasize popular music as part of visual pop culture, especially fashion (2008: 164).

What becomes clear within the data collected for this research, however, is that in the 1990s *NME*, for example, increased its emphasis on the visual appearance of indie musicians through written descriptions of ensembles worn and through the inclusion of more images. Thus, although representations of indie from the 1980s consisted mainly of written text within the weekly music press, representations of indie from the 1990s consisted of written text and visual images from the weekly music press and the monthly style press. Accordingly, representations of indie from the 1990s provided me with primary source data of the indie look.

As is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four, in 2001 *NME* gushed about the increasing popularity of indie, specifically focusing on the way in which high fashion designers, like Luella Bartley, were taking influence from indie rockers like The Strokes. As a result, I looked not only to youth-oriented music and style magazines to explore the representation of indie, but also to the high fashion press in an attempt to examine whether *NME's* declarations of indie's newfound fashionability were marked in the pages of high fashion publications in 2001, as well. I decided to look at *Vogue* because, as Anna König (2006) notes, it is a title representative of 'the world of high fashion inhabited by designers and store buyers alike' (Braham, quoted in König 2006: 218). Archival material for *Vogue* is also available in the London College of Fashion library.

1.2. 2001 – 2009

Telling the story of indie from 2001 until 2009 posed new methodological challenges, however. Whereas between 1980 and 2001 institutions and players within the field of fashion increasingly acknowledged indie, its key figures and the indie look, I found that between 2001 and 2009 indie became increasingly unrecognizable as a distinct cultural formation because the figures, events and styles central to the construction of indie were incorporated into other histories, as well. For example, between 2003 and 2007, indie musician Pete Doherty figured in discussions of the way in which Hedi Slimane of Dior Homme was creating a new, more effeminate masculine ideal. Thus, representations of Doherty produce knowledge about indie *and* contemporary fashionable masculinity. Such overlaps and intersections stand at the centre of analysis within this thesis, as their problematization provides new knowledge about the relationship between youth culture and popular fashion; however, such blurring is not without problems methodologically. That is, if the line around indie becomes increasingly blurred, how does one collect data on indie?

Evans (1997) argues that the problem of representing subculture is that it works to fix them. She explores this issue in relation to the Victoria and Albert Museum's *Streetstyle* exhibition from 1994, suggesting 'It was not so much that the representations were wrong; rather, the interviewees felt transfixed, immobilized, like a butterfly impaled on a pin in somebody else's butterfly collection' (1997: 180). Fixing subculture through representation not only poses problems for those young people experiencing subculture, but also works to define the subculture's boundaries in a way that does not allow space for blurring and overlap: in this case, between indie and the wider cultural formation of popular fashion. In contrast, research on youth culture should work to problematize such blurring, as opposed to working to fix boundaries. In an attempt to resist 'fixing' indie, regarding the period between 2001 and 2009, I decided to build a story around several key players within indie from this period: Pete Doherty, Hedi Slimane, festival fashion, Kate Moss and Topshop. In other words, instead of attempting to find representations of indie and thereby risk 'fixing' indie, I chose to look at media representations of these figures and to explore the way in which meanings around indie were constituted within these representations.

The 'snowballing' metaphor associated with sampling for interview research informed my choice of figures, styles and stores to include in this story. 'With this approach to sampling, the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others' (Bryman 2008: 182). However, as 'it is not just people that are the "objects" of

sampling' (Bryman 2008: 415), it can be argued that the 'snowballing' metaphor can be applied to the collection of textual data, as well. As discussed above, indie first came to public attention as a musical formation. Correspondingly, Pete Doherty offered a useful starting point as he was not only an indie musician, but also one that was identified as 'proper indie' by *NME* (18 November 2006), whilst simultaneously figuring in discussions of the new masculine fashionable ideal, discussed above. Thus, this indie musician introduced into analysis the ambivalence of the relationship between indie and the wider formation of popular fashion. Throughout the mid-2000s, Doherty was routinely associated, not only with indie music, but also with Slimane of Dior Homme *and* his girlfriend of the time, Kate Moss. Accordingly, I 'snowballed' from Doherty to Slimane and Moss, in order to collect more data concerning the connections between indie and popular fashion. From Kate Moss, I 'snowballed' into thinking about 'festival fashion' and Topshop, because media representations of Moss from the mid-2000s routinely focused on her festival looks and her range for the high street giant. Although central to the story of indie during this period, these figures/this style/this store draw attention to other stories, as well: the construction of a seemingly effeminate masculinity, the construction of 'stylish' femininities and the relationship between 'alternative' second-hand and 'mainstream' high street stores – themes that stand at the centre of the contemporary research project. In building the history of indie from 2001 to 2009 through representations of these figures, I worked to avoid 'fixing' indie, drawing attention instead to the way in which indie introduces a variety of points of problematization in relation to dress and identity within contemporary UK culture.

For this period between 2001 and 2009, in addition to *NME*, I looked at articles from the fashion pages of the broadsheet press to build this story of indie: *The Independent* and *The Guardian/The Observer*. I chose these sources because they each had accessible online databases of recent articles, and I was able to do keyword searches for each of the above-mentioned figures/terms. Searching through the archives of a range of print media sources that may in some way or another address indie music and popular fashion was beyond the scope of this project.

1.3. Analysing historical representations of indie

Jean Carabine's (2001) application of Foucauldian discourse within an analysis of unmarried motherhood between 1830 and 1990 informed this thesis's analysis of the historical representations of indie. Referring to the constitutive work of discourse, Carabine reminds us, 'discourses are variable ways of "speaking of" an issue which cohere or come together to produce the object of which they speak' (2001: 273). Here, I

understand the media representations of indie gathered from music, style, fashion and broadsheet media within the period spanning from the early 1980s until the late 2000s as producing indie. Significantly, Carabine continues, 'discourses are not continuous or unchanging over time' (2001: 273), but rather 'discourses are historically variable ways of specifying knowledges and truths' (2001: 275). This point is significant to this thesis, as the data gathered spanned a range of almost 30 years. Accordingly, I was sensitive to changes in discourse. I would argue, moreover, that change in the way indie is produced has not only to do with history, but also with shifts in *who* is producing discourse about indie. Introducing Bourdieu's concept field into the analysis of these historical representations allowed me to consider not only how indie was produced throughout its 30 year history, but also the 'authority' in relation to which such discourse on indie was produced (Bourdieu 1993a: 78).

2. Contemporary representations of indie

The goal of this part of the empirical research project was to explore the way in which indie is constituted as a cultural formation, as a space in which identities are constructed. Contemporary indie is produced across a range of sites: within musical performance, in flyers and club listings, through the space of festivals and gigs, in the window displays of retailers, through dress practices and within media texts, amongst other sites of emergence. Several of these sites of emergence are analysed within this thesis. I return to the analysis of the spaces of indie – festivals and retailers – and the dress practices of indie in the following section on ethnographic methods. Here, I discuss the analysis of print media representations of indie. Print media representations proved to be a useful source for data on indie for two reasons. Firstly, Foucault's concept of discourse can be applied relatively straightforwardly to the analysis of these media texts. Indeed, several scholars applying Foucauldian discourse within empirical analysis have demonstrated the fruitfulness of the media as an object of research (for example, as discussed in the literature review, Nixon 1996, 1997; Rocamora 2009). Secondly, as the media texts that produce indie emerge from music magazines and a range of different popular fashion sources, I was able to explore not only *how* indie was being produced, but also *who* was producing indie – a point that is elaborated on in a moment. The media texts I collected were all from magazines and newspapers printed within the period spanning from May until October 2009.

The collection of media representations of indie was far from a straightforward process, however. That is, how does one gather data on indie if the boundaries between it and the wider formation of popular fashion are blurred? I began the project by looking for

instances when the term 'indie' was used within media texts, collecting mostly listings for club nights and reviews of concerts from the daily papers circulating within London at the time (*London Lite* and *The London Paper*). This material was mostly written; however, there was occasionally an image attached to a concert review, picturing a musician singing into a microphone or dancing around on stage. Although this material was interesting, it did not provide much information regarding the indie look. Moreover, it did not provide any information regarding how the indie look might be translated into everyday dress by those people who are not performers. Accordingly, my collection of contemporary materials expanded to include those written and visual representations from the contemporary popular fashion and music print media that contribute to the construction of indie whilst not being specifically labelled as 'indie'.

Gillian Rose (2001: 143) explains that a Foucauldian methodological approach demands an 'eclecticism' in data collection methods, as the sites which produce a particular discourse are multiple and varied. She provides advice to those using a Foucauldian approach, explaining to first choose starting points. She continues,

[...] once the more obvious starting points for a discursive analysis have been established, it is important then to *widen* your 'range of archives and sites'. Ways of doing this are diverse. Those initial images and texts may well contain references to other images and texts that you can then track down. [...] A discourse analysis may also be able to use verbal material; you may want to conduct interviews yourself, or to record naturally occurring talk. You also need to invest time in the kind of browsing research that leads to serendipitous finds (2001: 143; emphasis in original).

To collect representations of indie, I drew on the three methods for extending research that Rose highlights in the above-quoted passage: finding references in original images, drawing from the interview data new themes and, finally, allowing myself some 'serendipitous finds'.

Indie music served as a starting point into data collection, and I first collected articles about indie musicians from the popular music press and also within lifestyle magazines. As is problematized in greater detail in the following two chapters, although there are some female musicians and journalists working within indie, as a musical formation indie is predominantly male. Yet, these are not the only figures related to and visible within the indie scene. Like Kate Moss with Pete Doherty, in 2009 Alexa Chung was the extremely visible girlfriend of indie musician Alex Turner of Arctic Monkeys. She was routinely pictured in the media going to parties with her friend Pixie Geldof. Indeed, Geldof and her sister Peaches are also related to indie music through their father, Bob Geldof. Other London 'it' girls share connections to indie, as well. For example, model

Agyness Deyn not only has dated various indie musicians (including the guitarist from The Strokes Albert Hammond Jr), but also has contributed vocally to several indie songs. Accordingly, I also searched for articles and images about these young women in addition to those about indie musicians.

The images of indie musicians and the aforementioned London ‘it’ girls served as my ‘starting points’. Specifically, they provided visual references regarding garments to watch. These images and the photographs I took at festivals (discussed in the following section) were the tools through which I developed a working description of the contemporary indie look. At the time of empirical research in 2009, the list of garments included: for men – trilbies, slim suits, short trouser legs and t-shirts with graphic prints; for women – floral-patterned skirts and dresses, black tights, waistcoats, wellies, ankle boots, crop tops, leggings, bodycon dresses and skirts, high-waisted dresses and skirts, leopard prints, faux fur and playsuits; for men *and* women – skinny jeans, leather jackets, blazers, cardigans, Converse trainers, distressed denim, hotpants, Wayfarers, trench coats, ‘nerdy’ glasses, hoodies, Doc Martens, shorts, loafers, boat shoes, brogues and American Apparel hoodies. Moreover, the indie look of 2009 included a variety of hairstyles for men and women: shaved sides, shaggy (unbrushed) hair, bleached hair or a quiff. This look is changing, often with new fashionable trends. For example, during the period of my research, ankle boots were giving way to brogues as the most visible footwear worn by women.

Not only did I use indie musicians as a starting point from which collect textual data, I also let the interview data inform my selection of textual data. Although talking specifically about interview research, Herbert Rubin and Irene Rubin (2005) draw attention to the importance of flexibility within qualitative research. They write, ‘Each major new discovery may require a redesign, figuring anew whom to talk to, where to carry out the study, or what concepts and themes to focus on’ (2005: 35). Their work on interviewing is discussed below. Here, like Rose’s (2001: 143) above-quoted point, their comments provide a useful foundation from which to think about the way in which, as the empirical research project developed, new pathways and points of analysis emerged. For example, a variety of the interview respondents mentioned mixing and matching high street and second-hand garments. Accordingly, I also collected articles and images that featured a combination of second-hand and first-hand garments. Moreover, the majority of female respondents (and several male respondents) mentioned Topshop in their interviews. Other stores mentioned were American Apparel, H&M, Urban Outfitters, Uniqlo, Zara and Primark. Accordingly, I collected print advertisements for these stores as well as articles and editorials that featured garments from these stores. Finally, as much

of my ethnographic research (discussed below) took place at festivals, I also collected representations of 'festival fashion'. I found that these representations form part of the wider set of 'street style' representations, and thus I also collected a number of 'street style' segments. Although the collection of textual materials and the ethnographic research project yielded two distinct bodies of data, the collection processes were mutually informative. As is noted below, potential interview respondents were chosen because they were wearing one or more of the garments from the list of indie-look garments developed from media representations.

Finally, my collection of representations of indie included some 'serendipitous finds': a Topshop Autumn/Winter 2009 Style Guide and The Saatchi Gallery Magazine *Art & Music* (Spring 2009) – both of which were extremely useful to the development of the analysis within this thesis. The former is a piece of promotional material that was distributed throughout the West End in the summer of 2009. I found a copy in the entrance to London College of Fashion's John Princes Street location. The Style Guide is produced as a magazine, written in collaboration with London-based style magazine *Platform*. It provides information on new trends and hip celebrities and, in so doing, works alongside other media texts to produce indie. It is also, of course, promotional material. Accordingly, I was able to use this piece of data to explore, not only the construction of indie, but also the strategy used by Topshop to build its own 'identity' (Chapter Five). The second 'serendipitous find' was an issue of *Art & Music* (Spring 2009) that a friend gave to me because he thought it would be of relevance to my project. On its website, the magazine describes itself as '[fitting] happily alongside other hip iconoclastic cultural magazines' and explains its genre as 'a journal which appeals to anyone whose taste in popular culture is not ghettoized into a single discipline' (www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk). The issue under analysis featured an article about indie musicians from the 1980s, and included interviews with men who had participated in the indie scene during this time. Significantly, these former musicians reflected not only on the music they played, but also the clothes they wore. This source thus provided data on the indie look of the 1980s, which I was able to place in dialogue with the accounts of the indie look that emerged in the 1980s (Chapter Four).

With the exception of these 'serendipitous finds', the remainder of my representational data was collected from a range of popular music and popular fashion print media sources that were published between May and October 2009. As indie continues to be a music genre, I looked at several contemporary music magazines: *NME*, *Artrock*, and *Q*. I chose these three music magazines in part because they are easily accessible, as they can be purchased from a range of local shops and bookstores.

Moreover, the three represent differing forms of publication. *Q* is an example of a glossy music magazine; as discussed above, *NME* has become glossier over the years (Shuker 2008); and *Artrock* is a small London-based magazine. However, articles about male indie musicians appeared not only within the music media, but also within lifestyle and youth lifestyle magazines. Further, articles about female indie musicians – specifically Florence Welch of indie band Florence and the Machine – appeared within the music media as well as within style magazines and across a range of popular fashion magazines for women. Music and musicians are not solely the concern of the music press, but also the lifestyle, style and fashion press of the UK. Further, the garments identified above as part of the contemporary indie look appeared in fashion editorials and articles focused on giving shopping advice. Thus, my data spanned from representations of musicians, to fashion editorials, to ‘what to buy’ segments, to articles about certain figures (such as Florence Welch or Alexa Chung). In addition to music magazines, I analysed a variety of popular fashion media sources, spanning a range of genres. I studied style magazines (*i-D*, *Dazed & Confused*), niche fashion magazines (*Pop*, *Ponytail*, *10 Men*, *LOVE*), high fashion magazines for women (*British Vogue*, *British Elle*), weekly fashion magazines for women (*Sunday Times Style*, *Grazia*, *The Observer*), daily papers (*The London Paper*, *The London Lite*), an American lifestyle magazine (*Interview*) and the male and female editions of an American youth lifestyle magazine (*Nylon*, *Nylon Guys*).

Each magazine title listed here occupies a different position within either the field of music media or the field of fashion media and thus offers a distinct ‘voice’. As in the historical research project, drawing on the Bourdieuan (1993a, 1993b) concept field, of this data I asked questions not only about *what* is being constituted, but also *who* is engaging in this act of discursive production. What ‘authority’ do they draw on when making certain statements? How can their ‘authority’ be understood in relation to the organization of the field in which they are situated? In other words, I thought relationally about the different media sources, exploring not only how indie is discursively constituted, but also how the fields of cultural production in which indie is produced are organized.

2.1. Analysing contemporary representations of indie

This thesis uses the Foucauldian (2002) concept discourse to frame textual analysis. As discussed in the preceding chapter, Foucault explains that discourse is made up of written and spoken statements; in short, discourse is language. Stuart Hall reminds us, however, written language *and* visual images similarly function as ‘systems of representation’ (Hall 1997a: 4). Accordingly, the Foucauldian concept can be applied to the analysis of visual

images as well as written (or spoken) texts. Indeed, as some scholars have noted, the question of how to utilize and analyse visual data has plagued sociological research (Ball and Smith 1992; Banks 2001; Emmison and Smith 2000), and thus discourse provides one such tool for drawing visual data into sociological research (see also Rose 2001; Rocamora 2009). This thesis used as examples of analysis Nixon (1997) and Rocamora's (2009) analyses of visual and written media representations – both projects were discussed in Chapter One.

Discourse is a useful concept through which to analyse representations of contemporary indie, as it points attention to the historicized nature of representation. The critical nature of Foucault's method, and discourse analysis more generally, is not about "getting at" some reality which is deemed to lie behind the discourse – whether social, psychological or material' (Gill 2000: 174). Rather, it is concerned with revealing that 'the present is just as strange as the past [...] to disturb the taken-for-granted' (Kendall and Wickham 1999: 4). Here, 'research is evaluated in terms of how well it unravels the way in which certain taken-for-granted truths are not universal or timeless but products of specific historical and political agendas' (Saukko 2003: 21). Accordingly, this thesis uses discourse analysis to make strange the contemporary construction of indie, to observe how it is a historical construction that, in turn, informs the way in which identities can form.

Discourse analysis is not without problems in relation to the object of investigation, however: the creation of identity within contemporary indie. Although discourse is a useful concept through which to analyse the way in which written and visual popular fashion and music media representations create historically specific meanings around indie, the concept does not provide the tools through which to consider how people experience indie and how they might respond to such representations. As Paula Saukko (2003: 19) explains, a

[...] post-structuralist methodological approach [such as this one based upon Foucauldian discourse] assesses the value of research in terms of how well it unravels problematic social discourses that mediate the way in which we perceive reality and other people.

It does *not* 'evaluate] research in terms of how well it manages to capture the lived realities of others' (Saukko 2003: 19). As noted in Chapter One, moreover, Muggleton (2000) criticizes the subcultural theorists work in that they, for the most part, failed to place under analysis the *experience* of subculture. Following Muggleton (2000), I wanted to consider this aspect of indie: how it is lived, experienced and practiced. Correspondingly, I engaged in an ethnographic research project of participants within

contemporary indie.

3. Ethnographic research methods

Ethnographic research explores the lived realities of people, specifically focusing on the ways in which people create meaning about themselves and the worlds around them. In the words of Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson (1995: 11), ‘ethnographers portray people as *constructing* the social world, both through their interpretations of it and through actions based on those interpretation’ (emphasis in original). Indeed, interpretations and actions stand at the centre of the present ethnographic project. I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviewing to gain access to people’s interpretations of the social world, and engaged in participant observation to observe people’s actions within specific social spaces – two ethnographic research methods that are frequently combined within qualitative research (Rubin and Rubin 2005: 2). As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 131) explain, ‘there are distinct advantages in combining participant observation with interviews; in particular, the data from each can be used to illuminate the other’. In this thesis, I used observational data to explore visually what the interviewees said and the interview data to assign cultural meaning to the things that I observed. The ultimate goal with this form of research was to explore the way in which these people participating in the cultural formation of indie engage in ‘practices of the self’ in order to produce themselves – a point that is returned to at the end of this section.

3.1. Participant Observation

The goal of observational research is ‘to produce detailed, qualitative descriptions of human behaviour that illuminate social meanings and shared culture’ (Foster 1996: 61). As Tim May (2001: 154) explains, ethnographers ‘enter a social universe in which people are already busy interpreting and understanding their environments’ and the role of the researcher is to thus draw attention to the meanings and interpretations of these people. However, another side of observational research is to gather data on the spaces of social interaction. Michael Stein (2006: 62) explains, “Place, persons and behavior are linked through meaning and experience. Places do not “act”, but they do contain and shape action, and may be strongly associated with it’ (see also Angrosino 2008; Gray 2003). The observational research project was focused around these dual foci of observing human activity and the spaces in which such activity takes place.

I first attempted observational research at indie concerts and club-nights in and around London, such as the *NME*-sponsored weekly party at Koko in Camden. Although

these spaces are interesting in relation to the activities of listening to and dancing to music, I did not find that they facilitated my observation of what clothing was worn and how it was displayed. For example, as attendees at gigs press forward towards the stage, there is hardly any room between bodies. There is no possibility of looking at what another person is wearing; there is only the possibility of looking at the stage. In contrast to gigs and club-nights, summer music festivals proved to be useful research sites for observation. Because they are held in the daytime on open field-sites, as opposed to in dark and cramped indoor locations, it was much easier to see what people were wearing. Like gigs, festivals feature certain spaces dedicated to musical performance. Unlike gigs, festivals also feature spaces for food and 'hanging out'. It was in these non-musical spaces of the festival that I conducted most of my observational research.

This observational research of the respondents' practices of displaying clothing and ensembles within indie spaces was covert. Access to these sites was easily obtained – the price of a ticket – and I entered the festival through the main entrances (as opposed to the VIP entrance) like most other attendees. Thus, my presence as a social researcher was unbeknownst to others, with the exception of those people whom I approached for interview. Further, as is discussed in greater detail below, I dressed in a similar way to other people at the festival, and thus did not stand out as a social researcher – an essential element of covert research (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). As Katherine Appleford (2011) notes in relation to the covert observational research she undertook in various high street stores, the fact that people are unaware that they are under observation poses ethical issues for research. In response to this issue, I would suggest that I only engaged in the activities 'appropriate' to the setting of the festivals.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 56) explain that, even in public spaces where access is granted to all, there are certain social rituals that are maintained: for example, in anonymous social settings, 'displays of a studied lack of interest in one's fellows, minimal eye contact, careful management of physical proximity, and so on'. Accordingly, they continue, there is 'the possibility that the fieldworker's attention and interest may lead to infringements of such delicate interaction rituals'. My actions as a social researcher did not differ from those of other festival attendees. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six, many festival attendees use the opportunity to observe others covertly. Thus, I would argue that, by engaging in the practices common to the social space in which I was undertaking observation, I respected the rules of that space and the inhabitants within it. One difference between my practices and those of other festival attendees is that I did document in photographs what festival attendees were wearing as well as how the spaces of the festivals were organized; however, in order to avoid a breach of ethics, I took mass

group photos and avoided capturing the faces of the respondents. As discussed earlier, I used these photos to build a description of the contemporary indie look. The argument presented in Chapter Six is in part based upon these observational data.

I visited four festivals between May and August 2009: The Great Escape, 1234 Shoreditch, Field Day and Reading Festival. The Great Escape is a three-day festival held in Brighton. It features a large variety of new and somewhat established bands and musicians, playing at various venues across the city. 1234 Shoreditch is a small one-day festival, held in East London's Shoreditch Park. It features bands and musicians who are either little-known or have a cult following. Field Day is a larger one-day, London-based festival held in Victoria Park. The festival features small acts as well as some larger names: at the 2009 festival, for example, Mogwai and The Horrors. Finally, Reading Festival is a large three-day festival in Reading, which features well-established and very popular acts: at the 2009 festival, Radiohead, Bloc Party and Yeah Yeah Yeahs. Two of the festivals were London-based (1234 Shoreditch and Field Day), and two were not (Great Escape and Reading Festival). Two of the festivals featured small, lesser-known acts (Great Escape and 1234 Shoreditch), and two of the festivals featured larger, more popular acts (Field Day and Reading Festival). I chose these festivals based upon two factors. Firstly, as I funded the empirical research myself, travel was restricted to near London locations. I stayed with a friend in Brighton and made a day-trip to Reading. The cost of traveling to and staying over at other festivals was prohibitive. Secondly, all four of the festivals visited featured bands that are popularly identified as indie by journalists, music critics and fans. Although the meaning of indie within the contemporary music environment is contested, the term does generally refer to guitar-based pop music. At the same time, however, there are variants of indie, such as 'indie-electro', 'indie-folk' and 'indie-pop' that bring attention to sonic divisions within the general category of 'indie'. The four festivals visited featured many bands that fall into these categories, as well as other acts, like hip-hop artist Chipmunk (at Reading) and various electronic artists (at Great Escape, 1234 Shoreditch and Field Day).

The observational data collected at festivals were useful in regard to building a working description of the indie look as well as in regard to collecting information about the intersections between space and the practices of looking and being looked at. However, observational data did not provide information regarding what these people were trying to do with their clothing and dress: their own interpretations of their actions. Entwistle (1997) discusses the difficulty of doing research on dress. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty, she explains, 'as a phenomenological experience, getting dressed is not one that can be observed' (1997: 184). She continues, 'observation would enable me to see the styles

of dress adopted but not how individuals thought about and decided on what to wear for such a context' (1997: 186). Instead, interviews provide access 'to the *decision making* and *knowledge* they employed in their everyday dress for this setting' (1997: 187; emphasis in original). Like Entwistle, I found interviewing to be a more fruitful method of qualitative empirical research. Listening to how the respondents construct themselves with words allowed me to hear the links they made between physical practice and the types of selves into which they wanted to produce themselves. Within my research, it does not matter whether or not these respondents are 'actually' doing what they say they are doing; what matters is the links that they are making and the discourses on which they are drawing.

3.2. *Semi-structured interviewing*

Interviews are useful for gathering information about how people construct meaning about themselves, their actions and the world around them. As Steiner Kvale (1996: 30) notes, 'The purpose of the qualitative research interview [...] is to obtain descriptions of the lived world of the interviewees with respect to interpretations of the meanings of the described phenomena'. In total, I conducted twenty-five semi-structured interviews with forty-six respondents. The shortest interview lasted only ten minutes and the longest lasted 45 minutes. The majority of interviews lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. I recorded all interviews and transcribed them myself. All interview respondents have been given pseudonyms. Of the sample, 27 respondents were women and 19 were men. All of the respondents, except one of the pilot interviewees, appeared Caucasian. The photos I took of festival crowds similarly reveal an uneven ethnic ratio. This is unsurprising within indie, as the shorthand definition of indie popularly used is 'four middle-class white guys playing guitar'. Indeed, the point of this research is to explore such a cultural formation, focusing specifically on the way in which, as indie is integrated into contemporary fashion in the UK, gender is implicated within its construction. The remainder of this section considers how I chose respondents before discussing the interviewing process.

3.2.1. *Sampling*

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 134) emphasize that 'the ethnographer must retain the leeway to choose candidates for interview'. They explain,

Otherwise there is a grave danger that the data collected will be misleading in important respects, and the researcher will be unable to engage in the strategic search for data that is essential to a reflexive approach (1995: 134).

This point is significant to my research. I chose all of my respondents based upon their ensembles, as self-selection processes seemed inapplicable to my particular research question. As discussed in greater detail below, the term 'indie' is contentious and, although it does refer to the cultural formation under analysis, it is not a term that is championed by those people participating within this cultural formation. Accordingly, I did not want to advertise the project as one about indie because I wanted to explore the attitudes and opinions of those people who refused to use the term as well as those who might champion it. However, this issue of labeling is not one that has to do solely with indie. As Muggleton (2000) notes in his research, the subculturalists he interviewed were resistant towards putting themselves in specific identity categories, preferring to emphasize individual experiences and styles. I also could not advertise the project as one about the more general connections between youth culture and fashion, however, as these terms are too vague, and I would potentially have garnered attention from a range of people dressed in an assortment of youth cultural styles, specifically those people who dress in spectacular or outlandish styles. Indeed, the purpose of this project is to look at a style that is far from 'spectacular' in the subcultural sense, as it is constituted in relation to contemporary popular fashion trends and through popular fashion garments. My own processes of selection were thus the essential foundation upon which the sampling process occurred in order to collect data appropriate for my particular research interests. I chose to approach people who were not only dressed in the garments characteristic of the indie look, discussed above, but also present in indie locations.

I chose three locations to find interview respondents – locations that are part of the cultural phenomenon under investigation. My main locations for finding respondents were the summer music festivals, chosen because they are the social space most closely identified with indie music. Eight interviews (with seven male and ten female respondents) were conducted at festivals outside of London. Ten interviews (with five male and ten female respondents) were conducted at festivals in London. I also decided to look at two other social spaces that form part of this wider cultural formation into which indie is interwoven: the London Fields and Brick Lane areas of East London. These two areas are analysed in greater detail in Chapters Six and Seven, respectively. I consider all of these sites to be productive of indie in differing ways. Referring to the post-subcultural theories of youth cultural group formations, outlined in Chapter One, festivals and London Fields provide a space for the emergence of temporary 'neo-tribes' (Bennett 1999; Maffesoli 1996), and the second-hand stores of Brick Lane are spaces that inform the construction of the 'local' context for (Bennett 2000) and part of the 'scene' of (Stahl 2004) participation in indie.

I chose to go to London Fields because the way people act within that social space resembles the way people act at festivals. London Fields and the neighbouring Broadway Market mark a popular place for people dressed in indie-look ensembles to congregate. Broadway Market is lined with pubs and hosts a weekly market with food and vintage clothing stalls, and London Fields provides a space for people to hang out and relax on a sunny day. In her analysis of Paris as 'a fashion city', Rocamora (2009) notes that outdoor spaces, such as parks and gardens, are frequently represented within literature and art as spaces of fashionable display (2009: 40-41). Indeed, London Fields is popularly understood as a space for display, with one section of the park known as 'hipster corner' because it attracts those people who are dressed most obviously in indie-look or related East London ensembles. Both London Fields and indie music festivals seem to nurture the practices of looking at others and being looked at by others – practices analysed in Chapter Six. Two interviews (with two male respondents and one female respondent) were conducted at London Fields. I chose to go to the Brick Lane area for its plethora of second-hand shops. Throughout the interviews, the respondents repeatedly discussed second-hand garments they were wearing at the time of interview or second-hand shops that they like to go to. As Brick Lane itself is a noisy and crowded street, I decided to sit on Cheshire Street, approaching people as they left Beyond Retro. On another Saturday, I stood outside the East End Thrift Store near Whitechapel. I conducted five interviews (with three male and five female respondents) outside these East London second-hand stores. A full list of interviews and interviewees is included in Appendix 1.

Beyond Retro proved to be particularly useful to my research, not only because I was able to interview some of its shoppers, but also due to some of its employees. Before the research began, I was personally acquainted with Jen – a member of Beyond Retro's print archive department. She had suggested to me that, as my project was about indie, I should come down to the store to do interviews. When I arrived one Friday, she had set up informal interviews for me to have with Alan – Beyond Retro's PR liaison – and Dave – a store employee who also played in a London-based indie band. Jen also talked with me about Beyond Retro and her own role there for my project. In truth, these data were unforeseen and unsolicited. Before going down to the store, I had known only that Jen worked there, not that she was part of the textile archives department nor what this department was. As I had not planned for this type of interview, the interviews with Jen and Alan were completely unstructured. Moreover, it became immediately apparent to me that neither Jen nor Alan was willing to talk about his/her personal dress practices, and thus I engaged in a series of open-ended questions about their professional roles at Beyond Retro. This point is significant when considering the theoretical concept 'practices

of the self'. Whereas the other respondents produced themselves within interview as people engaging with dress to develop themselves personally, Jen and Alan produced themselves as professionals, as 'cultural intermediaries' (Bourdieu 1984). Their roles are analysed in Chapter Seven, and their interviewing schedules are included in Appendix 2. In contrast, Dave was willing to discuss his personal experiences and dress practices and thus his interview took the same general shape as those of the other interview respondents.

3.2.2. Interviews

The main interviewing schedule I developed was largely based upon the pilot interview I conducted with two London-based respondents I had met through a mutual acquaintance: Rebecca and Adam. Like Alan, Jen and Dave, these two respondents knew that my project was focused on indie and were thus sympathetic to the term when discussed in interview. However, the pilot interview did draw attention to problems that were going to emerge in later interviews in relation to the term 'indie'. The following dialogue brings attention to this tension:

Rebecca: Most people wouldn't categorize themselves as indie.

Adam: Would they not?

Rebecca: I wouldn't ... I would be a bit embarrassed if I said, 'oh yeah, I'm really indie'. [Adam laughs]. I get really pissed off if people say 'you're so indie' because it's kind of derogatory. It's like...

Adam: Yeah, but you can categorize yourself as indie, but not say you're indie.

Rebecca: Yeah, exactly.

Rachel Lifter (RL): Whoa, what does that mean?

Rebecca: Because saying, 'yeah, I'm so individual', you kind of sound like a cunt, a little bit. You sound a bit up yourself, so just you prefer to say...well I do, I don't think I'm going to dress like someone...I don't think I'm going to dress like Rona from that band. I'm just going to be like, I am going to dress like I want, kind of thing. So saying that you're indie is a bit weird.

In this short dialogue Adam and Rebecca conflate the terms 'indie' and 'individual' and they draw attention to the embarrassment involved in self-identifying using either term. Yet, in saying 'you can categorize yourself as indie, but not say you're indie', Adam thoughtfully draws attention to the fact that this desire to be individual is central to the formation of indie. Their discussion affirmed a fact that I had anticipated: the term 'indie' itself is problematic, whereas the values underpinning it are not anathema to what people are thinking and doing. Chapter Six explores some of these issues around self-identification.

The interviews were semi-structured. I began each interview by asking the respondents to describe the outfits they were wearing at the time of the interview, using this opening question as a way to ease into the interview. Although I developed an

interviewing schedule that covered several pre-determined subject areas, the order of the questions varied and new areas opened up as the result of the flow of the conversation (Bryman 2008: 438). As May (2001: 123) notes, semi-structured interviewing 'enables the interviewer to have more latitude to *probe* beyond the answers and thus enter into a dialogue with the interviewee' (emphasis in original). My 'topical agenda, objectives and queries' (Holstein and Gubrium 1995: 29) were to get the respondents to talk about their looks, their shopping practices and wherefrom they get ideas and inspirations for their looks. Accordingly, the interviewing schedule was structured around these three areas; however, the order in which I addressed these issues was altered to suit the flow of conversation. I also allowed the interview to move in different directions, depending on areas opened up within the respondents' answers. For example, some respondents spoke about the cities in which they live (often London and Brighton), and thus I pressed these respondents on issues of place: how, in their words, their looks may or may not have cohered with the 'identities' of the cities in which they lived. This interviewing schedule is included in Appendix 3.

The main goal of this interview research was to gather data about the respondents' practices of dress and of self-definition. Although I was interested in the term indie and where it fit into their processes of self-identification, this theme was of secondary importance to the primary data of how the respondents spoke about themselves. However, the issue of indie hovered over the remainder of the interviews. Appleford's (2011) research similarly focused on a theme that might provoke negative response: class. She explains that within British culture class is both an 'obsession' and a 'taboo' (2011: 88). Accordingly, within her interviews with 53 British women she employed the delayed and indirect approach to the theme of class. Instead of introducing the theme at the outset of the interview, she waited until the respondents used class-related terms, such as 'naïf', 'posh' or 'stuck up', and then used these terms as a segue into the issue of class (2011: 89). I employed a similar approach. In seven of the interviews, the respondents brought up the term in relation to either their taste in music or their style of dress; however, when I pushed these respondents, several double-backed on their use of the term. They used it as a category to identify a general genre of music or style, but did not want to identify themselves as such. In seven other interviews I took an opportunity to introduce the term and met with varying responses, ranging from compliance to resistance. One woman from Reading Festival quite obviously took offense when I asked her if she would say if she was dressed in an indie way. Our interview ended shortly thereafter.

In the nine remaining interviews, the theme of indie never came up. In truth, these interviews played out much more smoothly than the others, as I was not forcing them to

engage with a term that they did not feel described them. I do not see this non-standardization of interview questions as a methodological problem because the point was not to get them to talk about indie per se, but rather to talk about the self. As a concept, 'indie' was used within this research a working tool to select respondents as well as textual data. Further, as Rubin and Rubin (2005) note, the key to qualitative research is to stay flexible within the interviewing process. They argue, when flexible, in-depth interviewing is able 'to accommodate new information, to adapt to the actual experiences that people have had, and to adjust to unexpected situations' (2005: 35). The interview schedule demanded these changes and, accordingly, all of the interviews in which I avoided the term 'indie' were conducted at the end of the ethnographic research project.

With the exception of the respondent who closed down the interview shortly after I introduced the term indie, good rapport – that is, 'mutual trust' (May 2001: 130) – was developed between the respondents and me. Many of the interviews proved to be conversational in nature, and often respondents asked me questions. Several respondents asked me about the clothes I was wearing (if I had made them or where I purchased them, for example), and others were curious to know more about my research, wondering if my work included any designing and/or styling. It could be argued that the ease with which many of these interviews played out was related to fact that, as the interview respondents have largely grown up in a context in which 'street style' is a prevalent form of fashionable engagement, they were already familiar with the role they are meant to play when a person approaches them, asking about their clothing. Indeed, one respondent informed me that she is regularly approached by people 'like yourself, a fashion student, often like a stylist...um a student stylist. They want to get inspiration from your outfit'.

In the preceding chapter, I suggested that Goffman's (1959) work is useful when analysing the way in which people engage in specific performances in certain situations in order to 'incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society' (1959: 31). Again, Goffman provides the example of young women feigning stupidity to stoke their boyfriends' egos (1959: 34). As is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five, 'street style' and 'festival fashion' representations proliferate throughout the contemporary popular fashion media, especially for women. Accordingly, it could be argued that the respondents knew what was expected of them in the context of a 'street style' interview and thus presented themselves to me within interview in a way that meets the social expectations of that situation. That is, in their discussions they intentionally perform the role of 'stylish person "on the street"' – the role that they are expected to play. Chapter Six explores these situation-specific performances in greater detail.

Further, it is important to consider the role played by my own appearance in the

creation of good rapport. As Holstein and Gubrium (1995: 4) stress, 'Both parties to the interview are necessarily and unavoidably *active*' (emphasis in original). They continue, the researcher actively presents an identity to the interviewee – an identity that works to inform the type of information gathered. My own appearance largely served as the tool through which I created my identity to the respondents. Accordingly, deciding what to wear was somewhat anxiety-provoking for me – an issue exacerbated by the fact that it was raining and cold at all four of the festivals attended. I decided to wear garments that were part of the list I was developing of popular indie garments: skinny jeans, crop tops, American Apparel garments, Converse trainers, vintage garments (leather jacket and scarves) and leggings. I wanted to seem accessible *and* stylish. Significantly, these garments are all part of my normal wardrobe.

This issue of my look introduces the question of my own participation in indie. Active participation within the culture under analysis poses advantages to and problems for social research. In relation to youth cultural research, for example, Paul Hodkinson (2002) argues that his personal involvement in the UK goth scene allowed him to develop an in-depth, critical reading of goth. As an insider, he did not have to rely solely upon interview respondents for information about the goth scene, but rather experienced the goth scene firsthand (2002: 5). In contrast, Thornton (1995) suggests maintaining distance between oneself and one's research population so as not to take up the ideologies of the group under study. She gives the example of subcultural researchers who 'relied on binary oppositions typically generated by *us-versus-them* social maps and combined a loaded colloquialism like the "mainstream" with academic arguments' (1995: 92; emphasis in original). The issue of inside-outside is complicated in relation to contemporary indie where the lines between indie and popular fashion are blurred – a stark contrast to Hodkinson's (2002) goth scene. This issue is complicated further because, as discussed above, one of the core values circulating within indie is to avoid identification with the group. Throughout the development of the project, the undertaking of the empirical research and the analysis and writing up of the data, I have asked myself where I stand in relation to contemporary indie and the wider popular fashion formation into which it is interwoven. That I have yet to be able to develop a succinct and straightforward answer to this question points to the complexity of the construction of identity within the formation under investigation.

3.3. *Analysing the ethnographic data*

I used the Foucauldian concept 'practices of the self' to frame the analysis of the ethnographic data. As discussed in the preceding chapter, I consider the concept as

referring to both physical practices – such as shopping, getting dressed, displaying clothing and looking at others – as well as to practices of self-representation – such as describing oneself within interview.

This part of the analysis was informed by Wendy Hollway's (2001 [1984]) analysis of gendered discourses. Although Hollway does not use the concept 'practices of the self' (not least because Foucault was only just developing it at the time of Hollway's writing), her analysis serves as an example for this thesis because she considers the way in which people take up discourses within their own self-construction. She explains,

My approach to subjectivity is through the meanings and incorporated values which attach to a person's practices and provide the powers through which he or she can position him- or herself in relation to others (Hollway 2001 [1984]: 272).

Hollway analyses three discourses on gender: the 'male sexual drive discourse', the 'have/hold discourse' that 'has as its focus not sexuality directly, but the Christian ideals associated with monogamy, partnership and family life' (Hollway 2001 [1984]: 273) and the 'permissive discourse' which resembles the 'male sexual drive discourse' in all ways except for one: 'it applies the same assumptions to women as to men. In other words it was – in principle at least – gender-blind' (Hollway 2001 [1984]: 275). She questions to what extent people take up such discourses, explaining, 'By posing such questions, it is possible to avoid an analysis which sees discourses as mechanically repeating themselves – an analysis which cannot account for change' (Hollway 2001 [1984]: 277). Indeed, it could be argued that the questions Foucault was asking of himself within his later work on 'practices of the self' were questions being asked by Hollway contemporaneously. Moreover, asking such questions points attention towards searching for the *reasons* for which people invest in certain discourses (Hollway 2001 [1984]: 278) – an important point of analysis within this thesis.

Two overarching themes emerged out of the interview data. Thirteen of the 19 male respondents identified a link between their musical tastes and their appearances, and a variety of the female respondents (and some of the male respondents) spoke about mixing and matching and 'the street'. Although I found these general patterns within the data, there was also a range of differences amongst the interview respondents' discussions. It was not until I introduced the concept 'capital' into analysis that I was able to problematize the *reasons* as to *why* and *to what extent* the respondents take up within their own processes of self-construction the 'truths' of the discourses that are produced within contemporary representations of indie. This point is returned to in the thesis's conclusion, as it signifies a theoretical contribution of the project: drawing together

Foucault's 'discourse' and 'practices of the self' *through* Bourdieu's 'capital'.

4. Reflections on the empirical research project

As I have attempted to show in this chapter, contemporary indie is a troublesome object of investigation because it is diffuse. Its boundaries are difficult to define, and thus, throughout the data collection process, I was faced with the question of whether a piece of textual data or a respondent's interview should be included as part of this research on indie. This issue emerged particularly forcefully within the interview project, as so many of the respondents avoided identifying themselves as indie. As this is a project about the construction of identity within indie, their avoidance of the term made me question the validity of the data gathered and the research project, more generally. How could I call what they are doing indie if they do not identify themselves as such?

The blurriness of the topic under investigation is also mirrored in the methods of analysis. Carabine (2001) explains that, within any project that uses a Foucauldian methodological approach, 'the analysis is selective, drawing upon apposite extracts to support the argument. [...] Similarly, the research could be criticized for being "just one person's account"' (2001: 306-307). Indeed, these criticisms can be leveled at my project, not least because of the issues just mentioned regarding the blurriness of indie's boundaries. As Saukko (2003) reminds us, however, all cultural studies research conducted within contemporary culture is marred by a blurriness of the object under investigation. She explains,

[...] the sociologists' youth subcultures or the anthropologists' villages no longer appear isolatable locales but more like nodes in networks traversed and shaped by flows of transnational media, money, people, things and images (2003: 6).

In consideration of Saukko's comment, I would suggest that this thesis falls in line with cultural studies research, problematizing the blurriness of contemporary culture.

Moreover, as mentioned in the thesis's introduction, in that it addresses both textual *and* ethnographic data, it attempts to 'do justice to the lived experience of people, while, at the same time, critically analyze discourses, which form the very stuff out of which our experiences are made' (Saukko 2003: 3). However, I retain that, in the words of Rosalind Gill (2000: 188), 'In the final analysis [this research] is an *interpretation*, warranted by detailed argument and attention to the material being studied' (emphasis in original).

Chapter Four

The evolution of indie

Through an analysis of music and popular fashion media representations, this chapter explores the evolution of indie over the thirty-year period spanning from the beginning of the 1980s until today. It examines how indie – once a cultural formation that was understood to exist outside of popular music and fashion culture – became integrated into the wider cultural formation of popular fashion, as first the alternative style press and later the high fashion and broadsheet presses consecrated indie musicians and produced discourses on the indie look. This chapter thus attempts to provide a historical foundation for the analyses presented in the remaining chapters – analyses that take as their starting point the fact that contemporary ‘indie’ is interwoven into popular fashion in the UK.

1. 1980s

1.1. The independent music scene of the 1980s

As discussed in the thesis’s introduction, the independent music scene emerged in the wake of punk in the early 1980s as a space for the production and distribution of music outside of the influence of and without the financial backing of major record labels and large distribution networks (Fonarow 2006). Many people nostalgically remember this scene as resistant to the commercializing forces of mainstream music. John Harris (2004) provides one such version of early indie. He writes,

In the scratchy, shambolic guitar music that defined the 80s left field, there was a clear sense of the rejection of all kinds of dominant cultural norms: the slick commerciality of the 80s mainstream, ambition as defined by sales figures and chart positions, and the swaggering masculinity that united the likes of Simon Le Bon, Spandau Ballet’s Tony Hadley and – ironically – Wham!’s George Michael (2004: 4).

This interpretation of indie as idealistic and revolutionary – Harris uses the term ‘*left field*’ – is not solely constructed through nostalgia; such descriptions of the indie music scene existed in the 1980s, as well. On 5 July 1986, Roger Holland wrote in *Sounds*, ‘The concept of an independent record label, *properly defined*, is of a body run without undue regard for market forces. One which is unwilling to compromise its integrity simply to make a few quick bucks’ (*Sounds* 5 July 1986: 21; emphasis in original).

For the most part, however, discussions of indie in the weekly music magazines

from the 1980s relied upon a more practical, less idealistic interpretation of the role of the independent music scene. In this second version of indie, the small independent labels working within the indie scene were to serve as stepping stones for bands and musicians who wanted to secure record deals with major labels. That is, the weekly music magazines of the 1980s did not present the independent scene as existing in opposition to the popular music industry, but rather as working in conjunction with it. The type of music being played by artists and bands working within the independent scene was thus described in the pages of the weekly music magazines of the 1980s simply as 'pop'. For example, after listing several independent bands, the music journalist Ron Rom declared 'All these groups, and plenty more, showed that the three minute pop single was alive in Britain in 1986' (*Sounds* 20/27 December 1986: 8). Similarly, Dave from the indie band The Mighty Lemon Drops admitted in an interview with journalist Mr. Spencer, 'My mother...finds it ridiculous that I can make a living out of being in a pop group' (*Sounds* 30 August 1986: 39). These examples demonstrate that for some artists and journalists working within and writing about early indie 'the scratchy, shambolic guitar music' of which Harris (2004) speaks was part of the same musical trend as Wham!'s upbeat hits: pop music.

This characterization of indie as part of the wider phenomenon of pop music is reproduced within recent interviews with 1980s indie musicians that appeared in the spring 2009 issue of The Saatchi Gallery Magazine *Art & Music*. Lawrence from 1980s indie band Felt remembers,

I didn't think we were in an underground scene; I thought we were overlooked but one day we would be in *The Face* and it wouldn't be a big deal...I wanted to be part of the whole pop scene at the time but I just wanted to do it with guitar music. I thought it could happen in the '80s and Felt would sit next to Duran Duran and Boy George and could have given them a run for their money (*Art & Music* Spring 2009: 40).

Similarly, Phil Wilson from 1980s indie band The June Brides recalled, 'I thought the bands I was listening to were totally pop. It didn't feel like any of it was hard music...it was the music that should have been popular' (*Art & Music* Spring 2009: 40).

In truth, however, the musicians working with independent labels and an independent distribution network never gained much popularity. The independent labels could not afford to make high quality recordings, often leaving indie records with the 'scratchy, shambolic' sound mentioned by Harris (2004), and the independent distribution networks simply did not provide a platform for widespread access to indie records (see Fonarow 2006 for a more in-depth discussion of independent distribution in the UK). Such realities led one *NME* journalist to write, 'These days records sell on marketing...to

compete you've got to be with a major. You don't win the league trophy by being in Division Four' (*NME* 14 June 1986: 15). Although some musicians that began their careers in the 1980s independent scene, such as The Smiths and Joy Division/New Order, celebrated popular success, the majority of indie artists and bands were forced to satisfy themselves with meager earnings and minimal recognition. As a result, the weekly music magazines devoted many pages to discussions of 'the indie ghetto' and the deficiencies inherent to the independent scene.

In short, there are two distinct versions of 1980s indie. The first version, constructed in large part retrospectively, presents the independent music scene of the 1980s as a place of resistance to pop music. In this version indie exists outside of and in opposition to the mainstream and, in this way, resembles the subcultures addressed by the CCCS theorists and their heirs (see the literature review of this thesis; Hall and Jefferson 1993 [1976]). The second version of indie, emerging in large part from the pages of the weekly music press of the 1980s, presents indie simply as pop music. Already in the 1980s, however, indie music was developing a distinct sound. The low standard of production associated with independent labels created a scratchy sound – a sound that became synonymous with the music emerging from the independent scene. Moreover, the type of music favoured by musicians in the independent scene was guitar-based. Thus, defined straightforwardly, indie music was music emerging from the independent scene; however, it also was inherently associated with the 'scratchy, shambolic guitar music' of which Harris speaks (2004: 4). Music journalist Keith Cameron addressed this inconsistency directly in a 1988 issue of *Sounds* in which he discussed the inherent contradiction of Australian soap-opera-actress-cum-pop-star Kylie Minogue's success on an indie label. He wrote, 'So, just in case you're confused: [...] Kylie Minogue isn't an indie band but she's on an indie, err, independent label and doesn't need to go to a major, although if she did, things might just become a lot less complicated' (*Sounds* 24/31 December 1988: 10). This confusion regarding the position of the 1980s indie music scene was carried into discussions of the indie look, as well.

1.2. The indie look of the 1980s

There is little written on the indie look in the 1980s. Journalists writing in the music weeklies of the time – *NME*, *Melody Maker* and *Sounds* – paid no attention to the appearance of indie bands, focusing instead on the sound of bands' music as well as band members' own discussions of their music. The alternative style magazines of the 1980s – *i-D* and *The Face* – largely ignored indie music and the indie scene. In 1986 and 1987, for example, *The Face's* coverage of indie consisted of an article about the greasiness of the

indie band Pop Will Eat Itself – an article that closed with the snobbish warning ‘Catch them on tour now, that’s when the dandruff really hits the fan’ (*The Face* March 1987: 12). *i-D*’s coverage of indie consisted of an article by William Leith that read,

What it comes down to is that today’s ‘Indie Scene’...are not ‘anti-style’. They’re just not stylish. For the most part, they don’t wear anoraks and national health specs as some kind of showbiz rejection number. They wear them because they can’t afford anything else, or because it’s not important enough to them to wear anything else, or because once they’d got started on kitting themselves out, they wouldn’t know where to stop. So they just don’t bother... They can’t be bothered with all the fashion sophistication and they’re wondering whether it’s possible to just...opt out (*i-D* October 1986: 76-77).

Leith’s use of the term ‘style’ is complex. As is discussed in the literature review of the present thesis, those theorists working within the field of youth cultural studies developed the concept in order to provide a theoretical tool through which to analyse the ensembles of young people. Within this literature, specifically within subcultural studies (Hall and Jefferson 1993 [1976]; Hebdige 1979) the concept signifies a rejection of popular fashion – a ‘Refusal’, in Hebdige’s (1979) words. However, as is problematized further in the following chapter, *i-D* magazine’s discourse has produced ‘style’ in a different way. In saying ‘They’re just not stylish’ and ‘They can’t be bothered with all the fashion sophistication’, Leith is drawing on a definition of ‘stylish’ that can be to an extent equated with the term ‘fashionable’. It can be argued that, for Leith, having ‘style’ is a marker of a certain level of ‘savviness’ or ‘sophistication’ with clothing. As is shown in the following chapter, however, this second meaning of ‘style’ does indeed retain a sense of a ‘rejection’ or ‘refusal’ of popular fashion trends in that it is associated with the ‘creativity’ of the ‘individual’. What is important within the present chapter is that Leith denies the indie look of the 1980s the characteristics of both forms of ‘style’. For Leith, the indie look is neither a ‘showbiz rejection number’ nor a demonstration of any sense of savvy with dress.

The disdain for the indie scene exhibited by the alternative style press of the 1980s was not unreturned. As early as 1980, Cynthia Rose – an *NME* journalist – poked fun at *i-D* for making ‘condescending “authoritative” statements like, “Originate, Don’t Imitate. Find your own I.D.”’ – the caption for the ‘straight up’ photo shoots featuring people found on the street, which made the magazine famous (*NME* 16 August 1980: 12). What becomes clear through these mutually critical articles is that, although other music genres and artists were identified as stylish/fashionable by the alternative style press in the 1980s, indie music and musicians were not. At this point, indie was produced as a music scene by the music media. What is demonstrated in the later sections of this chapter, however, is

that, as the style press (in the 1990s) and the high fashion press (in 2001) began to address indie, it became a cultural formation constituted at the nexus of music and style/fashion.

Simon Reynolds's (1989) interpretation of the indie look that appeared in McRobbie's (1989) edited volume *Zoot Suits and Secondhand Dresses* differs from that of Leith. According to Reynolds, the indie look of the 1980s can be documented as including the following:

[...] cardigans, overcoats, slacks, short jackets, caps, headscarves, quaint jewellery, short-back-and-sides (absolutely *no* long hair or perms)...dufflecoats, birthday-boy shirts with the top button done up, outsize pullovers; for girls – bows and ribbons and ponytails, plimsolls and dainty white ankle socks, floral or polka-dot frocks, hardly any make-up and no high heels; for boys – beardlessness and bare ears and tousled fringes. One garment above all has come to represent the scene – the anorak – the kind of short anorak, in bright optimistic patterns that remind you of curtain material (1989: 250-251; emphasis in original).

Reynolds subjects this look to semiotic analysis. In a discussion that implicitly references Hebdige's (1979) definition of style as a 'Refusal', Reynolds describes the indie look of the 1980s as a rejection of the celebration of sexual maturity promoted by the popular fashion culture of the 1980s. He writes, whereas most young people in the 1980s were interested in adulthood and the corresponding overt display of sexuality, the indie scene, in contrast, promoted a 'liberation from sexuality' (1989: 250). He continues that this 'dream of purity' is made manifest in a sartorial obsession with the Sixties and childhood – two pre-sexual periods (1989: 250).

There is no direct proof to support Reynolds' analysis. The themes of nostalgia for childhood and resistance to sexual maturity are not present in the discussions of indie from the weekly music and alternative style presses of the 1980s. Moreover, these themes do not arise in the interviews with 1980s indie musicians from The Saatchi Gallery Magazine *Art & Music* (Spring 2009). Therefore, not only does Reynolds' analysis of the indie look resemble Hebdige's analysis of punk style in its substantive focus on a Refusal, but the two studies can be similarly challenged in relation to the relevance of their conclusions to understanding how the phenomena of study were actually lived out by the participants (see Muggleton's (2000) critique of Hebdige (1979)). On the other hand, the interviews in *Art & Music* do support Reynolds' claim that the 1960s served as a stylistic reference point for the indie scene of the 1980s. Pete Momtchiloff from 1980s indie band Heavenly remembered his look as, 'A sort of beat-up '60s look...You couldn't really buy these clothes in the high street so charity shops were a godsend' (*Art & Music* Spring 2009: 41). Similarly, Paul Kelly (who directed the film *Finisterre* for the 1980s indie band St.

Etienne) recalled,

It's difficult now to imagine how hard it was to find good clothes back then. Nothing was quite what you were after or even the right size and as a result any attempt at replicating the '60s dandy could have you looking like a cross between a geography teacher and a tramp. Our suede jackets, cord trousers and winkle-picker boots were at odds with the '80s high street chic' (*Art & Music* Spring 2009: 41).

Although these musicians understood their music as belonging to the same pop tradition as other artists of the time, they acknowledge a difference between their look and popular fashion trends. However, whether or not the participants of the indie scene in the 1980s were attempting to present a 'Refusal' (Hebdige 1979) of popular music and fashion culture, a distance remained between indie and these popular cultural formations because of sartorial differences and differences in the sound of the music. As is shown in the remainder of this chapter, however, indie's isolation from popular music and fashion culture would soon come to an end.

2. The 1990s

2.1. Britpop and the increasing popularity of indie music

At the beginning of the 1990s, the stereotype of the indie musician as an unfashionable youth playing guitar was all but fully solidified within the weekly music press. For example, in a review of a gig by indie band Strangelove, music journalist Johnny Cigarettes wrote, 'they immediately nail their colours...proudly to the suburban lamppost of indie guitar mediocrity, with no fewer than three unreconstructed fringes, two Rickenbacker guitars and a lovingly uncultivated crappy dread mop assaulting our finer aesthetic sensibilities' (*NME* 22 May 1993: 37). Moreover, by the beginning of the 1990s, the music press indicated that this stereotype was relevant not only to indie musicians, but to fans of indie music as well. Descriptions of indie fans – or indie kids – included 'white, spotty, middle class boys' (*Sounds* 27 October 1990: 16), 'pubescent and college kids' (*Sounds* 15 December 1990: 22), 'the mimsy, Keats-reading, middle-class undergrad mummy's boy called Quentin with spots, a blue-and-white hoped (*sic*) tee-shirt' (*Melody Maker* 12 September 1992: 7) and simply 'the T-shirted kids' (*NME* 20 November 1993: 36). Indie musicians and fans alike were classified as unfashionable youths with a passion for poorly played guitar music.

Similar to the indie musicians of the 1980s, those of the early 1990s expressed a desire to achieve widespread popularity. For example, in an interview with *NME*, Brett Anderson – the lead singer of indie band Suede – criticized the limited amount of success achievable within the independent scene, arguing, 'That's slightly pointless, isn't it?'

Instead, he continued, he wanted 'to appeal to people who aren't utterly obsessed with music; because it tends to mean that you're writing good tunes' (*NME* 6 November 1993: 27). Anderson's claims resonate with those made by indie musicians in the pages of the weekly music press throughout the 1980s. The difference between Brett Anderson and these indie musicians from the 1980s, however, lies in the fact that Brett Anderson's band Suede did, in fact, become the most popular band in the United Kingdom in 1993.

Suede did not resemble many of its indie predecessors. At the centre of the early 1990s indie scene stood an indie sub-genre called shoegazing – so called for the tendency of band members and audience members to stare at their shoes whilst playing/appreciating live music. The indie shoegazer was, in a sense, an extreme caricature of the previously described indie figure; it was the embodiment of awkward youth. In contrast, Brett Anderson's stage presence was electric, resembling David Bowie's more so than an insecure student's (see McLaughlin (2000) for an in depth discussion of Brett Anderson's stage performance). Not only Brett Anderson, but Damon Albarn from Blur, Justine Frischmann from Elastica and Jarvis Cocker from Pulp, amongst other musicians, led their bands out of the 'indie ghetto' and into the national spotlight. This movement of music – known as Britpop – would remain at the centre of British popular music for the next several years. Moreover, such popularity had a sizeable effect on the indie artists and musicians. Writing for *NME* on 7 January 1995, John Harris summarized the changes to indie as a result of Britpop, mentioning

[...] the way [Britpop]'s binned the sad accoutrements of indie, moved away from being drab, underachieving and ever-so-slightly apologetic – and turned itself into a wagering, conceited creature with its own sparkling aristocracy (*NME* 7 January 1995: 8).

By the mid-1990s, the indie sub-genre of Britpop was the height of popular music – a development that fuelled further the debate, discussed in the preceding section, concerning whether indie should be considered a musical genre or a form of musical production.

2.2. *The 1990s indie look and the style press*

The mid-1990s Britpop bands were popular enough to get press not only in the weekly music magazines, but in the monthly and bi-monthly alternative style magazines as well. Moreover, the alternative style press did not make any further comments about the unfashionable look of indie musicians like Leith did in 1986, but rather greeted the Britpop groups with excited wonder.

Eager to detail precisely what the bands were wearing at a gig or during a

magazine interview, *The Face*, *i-D* and *Dazed & Confused* presented glowing characterizations of the visual qualities of the Britpop bands. For example, in the March 1993 issue of *The Face*, Brett Anderson's entrance to the stage of a gig was documented: 'There's an excited cheer as the band come on, Brett in see-through, buttonless black top and his ubiquitous needle cords' – a description that contains an appreciation for Anderson's unique and definable personal style (*The Face* March 1993: 95). Similarly, in the December 1993 issue of *i-D*, Tony Marcus described Pulp as 'the ultimate Oxfam band'. The article continued, "'Pulp keep using everybody's cast-offs, the things other people have rejected," says Jarvis. He's wearing an old LCD wristwatch, the kind that tells the time in flashing electric red when you press the button' (*i-D* December 1993: 18). Here, *i-D* celebrated Cocker's sartorial ragpicking. It is in a May 1994 issue of *The Face* that Damon Albarn and Graham Coxon from Blur received implicit praises from the style press. In an interview that took place at the Walthamstow dog races, the author Cliff Jones gave an account of how boys wearing shell suits – a garment inherently associated with the working class in the UK – made fun of Albarn and Coxon's clothing choices (*The Face* May 1994: 44). Such an account builds a positive picture of the musicians' clothing by relying upon the readers' aversion of the boys in shell suits. Finally, in an article detailing the multiple reincarnations of black drainpipe jeans, Luella Bartley wrote that 'This time around they are once again appearing on the most fashionable lower halves in the pop business. Elastica are the '90s patron saints of all that is fashionably black and drainpipe' (*Dazed & Confused* Issue 14 1995: 9). Bartley's straightforward praises of the sartorial choices of the band members of Elastica foreshadowed the aesthetic characteristics of her own yet-to-be-developed clothing line. Gathering together all these praises, Susan Corrigan of *i-D* wrote in an article called 'Boys R Us', 'There's never been a better time to be a pretty boy in a band. Indie's gone glam, and that three-button suit is more important than the three-chord song' (*i-D* June 1995: 21).

The style press's interest in indie in the 1990s has important consequences for the construction of indie. Firstly, that such representation included descriptions of what indie musicians wore points to changes in the discursive constitution of indie. With the exception of Leith's article for *i-D* (October 1986) and Reynolds's (1989) analysis, representations of indie in the 1980s produced it as a cultural formation that is formed around music and enacted through listening to and playing music. In the 1990s, through the alternative style press's coverage, indie became a cultural formation discursively constituted through representations concerning music *and* clothing. Of course, clothing was always present within indie; however, before the mid-1990s the significance of these sartorial acts remained of secondary importance within indie. Acts of music-playing and

music-appreciation were of primary importance. Moreover, that the style press championed the looks of the above-mentioned musicians points attention to the fact that in the 1990s the indie look was beginning to gain symbolic capital within the field of fashion.

Turning to this issue of field, it can be argued further that through these articles the style press worked to consecrate the Britpop musicians, identifying the musicians as 'fashionable', whilst simultaneously claiming the authority to make such statements about the value (here, the fashionability) of these musicians. What is problematized in greater detail in the following chapter is how the style press in the 1990s was, in a sense, still the 'newcomer' to the field of popular fashion in the UK, although several titles had been around since the early 1980s. The style press of the 1990s championed an alternative value system to that of the high fashion press. In other words, the style press's definition of 'fashion' differed greatly from that of the contemporaneous high fashion press. Again, this issue of the organization of the field of fashion media is problematized in greater detail in the following chapter with reference to Jobling (1999) and Lynge-Jorlén's (2009) work on the area. In the present chapter, it is important to consider the organization of the field of fashion media in relation to who is consecrating indie and what symbolic capital in the field of fashion indie gains as a result. Whereas the style press began to consider the indie look in the 1990s, the high fashion press of the time continued to ignore indie. Between 1993 and 1995, *Vogue's* only acknowledgement of indie was a short review of an Elastica gig by correspondent Barney Hoskyns (*Vogue* February 1994: 30). The symbolic capital that indie gained in the field of popular fashion in the 1990s was thus that capital associated with the style press and its desire to destabilize the existing hierarchies in the field of popular fashion through a challenge to the values of the field. In short, the indie look was discursively produced as an alternative, 'stylish' look.

This is a drastic change since the 1980s. For example, in the October 1994 issue of *i-D* journalist Tony Marcus wrote, "There might be 100,000 different reasons to like Suede, but the most immediate revolve around how deeply the idea of this teenage outsider works its way into Brett: body, voice, sexual identity, songs' (*i-D* October 1994: 26). In no uncertain terms, Marcus called Brett Anderson an outsider. His words are not critical, however. Marcus did not use the term 'outsider' negatively to relegate Anderson to the edge of popular culture, but rather he regarded Anderson's outsider status as an asset: in his opinion, the most poignant reason to like Suede. Thus, by the 1990s, indie outsiderism had evolved from being a badge of 'uncool' to being a badge of 'hipness'.

2.3. *The influence of grunge*

In an attempt to understand the alternative style press's shifting attitude towards indie and the indie look, it is important to consider the influence of grunge on the alternative style press as well as on the high fashion press. Grunge was a music and fashion phenomenon that emerged from the dingy basement clubs and cramped recording studios of Seattle in the early 1990s. The movement quickly gained popularity in the United States, and the UK followed suit. The popularity of grunge in the UK opened a space for the increasing popularity of indie, as well. At the forefront of the grunge movement was the troubled musician Kurt Cobain – the lead singer in the band Nirvana – and, with him, his wife Courtney Love – the lead singer in the band Hole. His look consisted of un-brushed blond hair hanging just past his ears, plaid lumberjack shirts and filthy, old jeans. Her look consisted of un-brushed blond hair hanging just past her ears and pretty, secondhand dresses that were often in tatters. In the media images from the early 1990s, the pair looked disheveled, and much of the press coverage the couple received related to their drug use and marital problems. Their grunge look, however, got the attention of several fashion designers, most notably Marc Jacobs, who in 1993 took the helm of the Perry Ellis design house.

Jacobs' spring 1993 collection took direct inspiration from the grunge look. It consisted of 'floaty, flowery dresses [like Love's], silk "flannel" shirts [modeled on Cobain's], shrunken tweed jackets, and knitted caps, all tossed together in seemingly random combinations, often over satin Converse sneakers or clunky army boots' (Foley 2004: 16). The collection served as an example of Polhemus's (1994a) 'bubble-up' diffusion: when a style emerges from the streets – in this case, the Seattle music scene – only to be emulated and co-opted by high fashion designers. Jacobs's collection for Perry Ellis arguably had a large influence within high fashion in the 1990s. British *Vogue* at times guided readers to take on the grunge look. For example, in an April 1993 issue of the magazine, fashion designer Rifat Ozbek summarized the grunge look; he said, 'You get out of bed and put whatever's on the floor next to you. Isn't that what grunge is?' The article continued,

He's quite right – the point is not how *much* thought goes into grunging it, but how little. 'Accessorizing' may be a newly dirtied word, but if your current cache amounts to a pair of gilt earrings and a choker, you might want to line up a few extras to reach out for from under the duvet this summer, such as dainty thermal vests, crochet-knit anything – belts, bags, beanies, gloves – and workaday boots or sneakers. Ditch the earrings for a homespun thong necklace hung with a minute ornament...and then forget that you've put any thought into it at all (*Vogue* April 1993: 231; emphasis in original).

The significance of the grunge look to the present study lies in the fact that it

brought positive attention – and negative attention as Marc Jacobs was fired from Perry Ellis shortly after his grunge-inspired collection – to a visual aesthetic that greatly resembled the indie look. That is, the grunge look and the indie look of the 1990s were similarly constructed via a do-it-yourself assemblage of secondhand garments and shared an overall image of looking like one dressed without a care to how one looks; recall the descriptions of Jarvis Cocker and Damon Albarn's ensembles in *i-D* and *The Face*, respectively. These continuities between the grunge and indie looks did not go unnoticed by the alternative style press. As Britpop took over from grunge in 1993 to be the most popular guitar-based musical movement in Britain, the alternative style press noted how similar the newly popular indie look was to the grunge look. For example, in an end of the year fashion round-up of 1994, *i-D*'s fashion editor Edward Enninful writes, 'in the UK, quintessentially English indie bands like Blur, Pulp and Elastica defined a style that could only be described as a one step progression from grunge' (*i-D* October 1994: 51). Thus, in that the grunge look had symbolic value within the field of fashion, it can be argued that (to use Enninful's terminology) it would be just a 'one step progression' until the indie look gained symbolic value within this field, as well.

This symbolic 'gate opening' was not the only lasting effect grunge had on the field of popular fashion in the UK. There was a second side to grunge that emerged not from the music venues of Seattle, but rather from Croydon: Kate Moss. In July 1990 Kate Moss posed for her first major editorial for *The Face* called 'The Third Summer of Love'. Styled by Melanie Ward and photographed by Corinne Day, Moss appears on the beach, playful and childlike. Three years later, Day photographed Moss for the lingerie editorial 'Under Exposure' that appeared in the March 1993 edition of *Vogue*. This second shoot proved to be incredibly controversial as the use of Moss' still childlike body to model underwear was seen by many as pornographic (see Jobling 1999 for an analysis of responses to the editorial). Amidst the controversy, Moss' career was launched. Throughout the following years she would be referred to as the anti-supermodel or the super-waif. Her playful, childlike presence on the runways and in the pages of *Vogue* and other high fashion magazines served as an aesthetic challenge to the hard bodies of the supermodels of the 1980s and early 1990s.

Moss's beauty rested in its seeming 'effortlessness' and 'realness'. She gained widespread popularity not for being physically perfect (like the supermodels of the 1980s), but rather for being an average girl from Croydon who did not have to try hard to be graceful and beautiful. In an article about Kate Moss by Lesley White in the August 1994 issue of *Vogue*, the magazine's then fashion director Lucinda Chambers argued, 'That aura of normality...is the reason the kids follow her like a pop star – she's not the ultimate

body like Helena Christensen or sharp and extraordinary like Linda Evangelista, *but she is accessible*' (*Vogue* August 1994: 92; emphasis added). Kate Rhodes (2008: 205) writes of Kate Moss, 'Moss embodied the fairytale switch from "found" woman-child into professional model before the eyes of magazine readers seduced by the possibility of continuous self-transformation'.

Moreover, in part due to Moss' increasing influence within the fashion world, 'realness' became a fashionable ideal in the 1990s. In an article entitled 'In vogue. Less than perfect' that appeared in the January 1994 issue of *Vogue*, the fashion journalist Susan Irvine wrote, 'Anything that undermines the acceptable artifice of fashion and risks a little of the rawness of reality grabs the attention now' (*Vogue* January 1994: 11). She continued,

Nobody wants to look immaculate (read 'anally retentive') any more. Everybody wants to reconnect with reality. Absent for so long, reality has developed a gritty glamour all of its own. For some time now, the driving force of fashion has become the street, not the catwalk. Instead of stores producing downscale versions of designer clothes, designers have been producing upscale versions of street clothes. These are best modeled by people who themselves wouldn't look out of place on the streets (*Vogue* January 1994: 12).

That Irvine champions 'the street' as 'the driving force of fashion' and the 'gritty glamour' of 'reality' is significant. As is explored in greater detail in Chapters Five and Seven, 'street style' and realist fashion imagery are photographic styles that emerged from the pages of the alternative style press. In that these styles are being championed within the pages of *Vogue* brings attention to shifts within the field of popular fashion in the UK in the 1990s. Again, these shifts are explored in greater detail in the following chapters. Here, it is important to note that these changes – specifically the fact that the fashion aesthetic articulated within the pages of the style press began to gain symbolic value within the field of popular fashion – provided a space for a reconsideration of the indie look.

Indie's position within the field of fashion did indeed change in 2001, when a New York-based five-piece band called The Strokes stormed the UK and placed the indie look at the centre of popular fashion.

3. 2000s

3.1. 2001 – the year indie became fashionable

Before they even made a name for themselves in their hometown of New York City, The Strokes achieved success in the UK. Mark Hooper wrote in the September 2001 issue of *i-D*, 'In the press (and what press – from the indie inkies [i.e. the weekly music press] to the broadsheets in a matter of weeks), they've come across as a group raised in New York but

aimed squarely at London' (*i-D* September 2001: 308). The Strokes greatly resembled (in sound and in appearance) the Britpop bands of the 1990s – a point that did not go unnoticed by the alternative style press. For example, in the July 2001 issue of *The Face*, Johnny Davis wrote, 'Not since the good years of Britpop (Suede, Blur, Elastica) have we had style-and-content pop stars you'll want to take to your hearts and pin to your walls' (*The Face* July 2001: 103). At the same time, however, the alternative style press's response to The Strokes differed from their response to the Britpop bands. That is, no longer was the style press responding to these indie musicians as quirky, oddball outsiders, but instead, they were describing The Strokes, in Davis's words, as 'coolness itself' (*The Face* July 2001: 103). In 2001, the alternative style press acknowledged that the indie look championed by The Strokes was the peak of popular fashion.

Similarly, in November 2001 *Vogue* acknowledged the significance of The Strokes within the popular fashion environment. In an article entitled 'Pick and Mix', *Vogue* journalist Bethan Cole described the fashionable aesthetic sweeping through London. She wrote,

A bar in Hackney, east London. An art exhibition launch in the West End. A club in south London. The venue is interchangeable, but the look is the same. Drainpipe jeans, worn tight, almost stuck to the skin. Heeled courts, either round-toed or pointed. A gently ruffled, high-necked lace or chiffon blouse – light as oxygen – and a tailored jacket, precision-fitted. This is the latest variation in the cacophony of jumbled-together smart and casual that the Generation Xers of fashionable young London have been sporting for the last 18 months or so. It is the latest version of the knowing mix of distressed and smart that alternative dressers threw together. And suddenly, this summer, it was everywhere (*Vogue* November 2001: 111).

She continued, 'The smart-casual trend has made off-runway appearances in New York, where groovers like rock band The Strokes...have been sporting combinations such as tweed jackets with white shirts and jeans for many months' (*Vogue* November 2001: 113). *Vogue's* interest in 'the latest variation in the cacophony of jumbled-together smart and casual that the Generation Xers of fashionable young London' (*Vogue* November 2001: 111) resembles its interest in grunge. In reporting on the two fashion trends, *Vogue* aligns itself with youth cultures and the styles emerging from them – an act that signifies the increasing value of youth culture across the field of fashion media. At the same time, however, Cole's article serves to reaffirm the 'established' hierarchy of the field of fashion in that she pinpointed Marc Jacobs as the originator of the look. 'Blame Marc Jacobs', she wrote. 'It was he who first brought the jacket-and-jeans smart-casual look to catwalks a few seasons back' (*Vogue* November 2001: 112-113).

Yet in identifying Marc Jacobs as the source of this aesthetic, Cole unintentionally

brought attention to indie, for Jacobs was using in his Marc by Marc Jacobs advertisements Kim Gordon and Stephen Malkmus of the American indie bands Sonic Youth and Pavement, respectively (see www.marcjacobs.com). Marc Jacobs was not the only designer paying attention to the indie music scene at this time. Providing a general summary of the 2001 fashion environment, *The Guardian's* deputy fashion editor Charlie Porter stated,

It just so happens that [The Stroke's] look – skinny and fucked-up tailoring, lank hair and tough androgyny – is right for now and has the same feel as a lot of the new season's collections. In particular Gucci and Dior Homme for men, and in womenswear Marc by Marc Jacobs and especially Luella (*NME* 30 June 2001: 4).

Not only was the indie look championed by indie bands and the hot designers of 2001 alike, the weekly music press of 2001 celebrated indie's newfound fashionability. Indeed, it is of note that the above quotation from Charlie Porter was taken from *NME* and not from the style and high fashion press.

As the only remaining representative of the weekly music press (*Melody Maker* having closed its doors in 2000, and *Sounds* having ended much earlier in 1991), *NME* seemed to take great pride in knowing that a band that was indie in origin displayed a visual aesthetic poised at the centre of fashion. As a result, much ink was devoted not only to discussing The Strokes' sound, but to describing their look, as well. *NME* interviewed Luella Bartley – by this point, one of London's hip young designers – asking her to explain the indie look. *NME* reported,

Designer Luella Bartley says her latest womenswear collection, which has been described as 'hard luxury', is inspired by the same esthetic as The Strokes. She told *NME*: 'It's a bit New York old school, slightly punk, but it appeals to the English as well. It's slightly scruffy public school. It's that really scruffy blazer, shirt and tie – it's such a good look.' (*NME* 30 June 2001: 4).

Further, *NME* implored Bartley to describe *how* to put together the indie look. She complied, saying,

It's not really a high fashion thing. Just go to the East Village thrift stores in New York or Notting Hill. Julian [Casablancas] wears a really old man's jacket, a grey pinstripe, which is easy to find. Combining that with a pink satin tie is genius. You maybe need some really faded black jeans, quite a skinny leg. They do that scruffy leather jacket too – it's the perfect look for really cheap (*NME* 30 June 2001: 4).

This interview with Bartley serves as a guide to readers regarding *how* to create the look and thus participate in indie via dress. To be indie in 2001 was to be interested in

constructing the self through music *and* fashion.

Moreover, *NME*'s interview with Bartley points toward a shifting of the values circulating within the sub-field of indie music. As was discussed in Chapter Two, Bourdieu (1993b: 72) argues that the 'specific stakes and interests' of a given field are 'irreducible to the stakes and interests specific to other fields'. Yet, as Rocamora (2009: 58) writes, statements made in one field inform those in another field. In the case of indie, it can be argued that positive appraisals of the indie look made in the field of popular fashion in the UK did indeed inform the value system within the sub-field of indie music – a trend that began in the 1990s and intensified in 2001. That fashion became increasingly significant to indie throughout this period can also be understood in relation to the increasing significance of visual culture within musical formations throughout the 1990s (see Frith, Goodwin and Grossberg 1993). The sub-field of indie music became structured, not solely around music, but around the combination of music and fashion. In 2001, indie was valued within the field of popular fashion *and* fashion was valued within the sub-field of indie music. The year 2001 thus marks an integration of these two fields.

3.2. *What happened after 2001?*

That the sub-field of indie music and the field of popular fashion in the UK became entwined in 2001 and have remained so until the present stands as the starting point for the remainder of the chapter: the remainder of the story of indie's evolution. Exploring the interconnectedness of the two fields is useful as it introduces several points of problematization in relation to the construction and experience of fashion within contemporary culture. As a result, this final sub-section of the present chapter uses the story of indie to introduce several of the themes that are problematized throughout the remainder of the thesis: the ambivalent relationship between indie masculinity and the notion of 'fashion', the increasing significance of 'style' and 'festival fashion' within contemporary fashion discourse for women and the changing relationship between second-hand and high street clothing sources.

In an end-of-the-year summary of 2001, one *NME* journalist declared, 'It's a truth universally acknowledged that indie bands don't have a clue about fashion – and, it must be said, vice versa. But everything changed in 2001' (*NME* 22/29 December 2001: 67). Putting forward a point that the magazine had belabored throughout the year, the author argued that the indie bands of 2001 'knew how to dress' (*NME* 22/29 December 2001: 67). Moreover, *NME* made sure that its readership 'knew how to dress' as well. Not only did the magazine rely on fashion designer Luella Bartley to describe the indie look, but it also constructed its own 'how-to' guide in an article called 'Stroke of good luck' (*NME* 18

May 2002: 14). This guide focused specifically on 'Julian's [Casablancas of The Strokes] "grungy" look' – a title that draws further attention to connections between the grunge and indie looks. It claimed, 'The grunge look, like the gypsy look, is all about not looking controlled'. The key elements of the grunge look include: 'Converse shoes: generations of NY rockers from the Ramones to The Strokes have sworn by these canvas classics'; 'Trews: distressed denim or the tight suit type – it's up to you'; 'Tatty suit jackets or army fatigues: your local Shelter shop's never been such an oasis of fusty fashions'; 'White shorts: note the "peasant"-style lack of buttons on this one [indicating an accompanying photo]'; 'Retro shirts; lose the beer belly, though, lads'; and 'Ties: no fat knots though' (*NME* 18 May 2002: 14).

The looks of several indie musicians captured the attention of the *NME* throughout the early part of the 2000s. As a result, the magazine presented these musicians as fashionable icons for its readers to emulate sartorially. After Julian Casablancas came Caleb Followill of Kings of Leon. On *NME*'s 'Cool List' for 2003, Followill ranked fourth. The accompany blurb read:

Caleb looks cool, he talks cool, he sings cool and he possibly found the original cool while rummaging through the vintage T-shirts in a thrift store in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury. Of course, there's the look: velvet jackets, battered T-shirts, braces, drainpiped but ever so slightly flared torn jeans – all three sizes too small – coupled with the best tash-and-beard combination seen in the last 30 years. Caleb is the reason why all of your town's charity shops have been looted by the local fashionistas... (*NME* 29 November 2003: 37).

Johnny Borrell of Razorlight celebrated a moment in the *NME* spotlight: 'Modelling his customary magpie-in-a-charity-shop fashion sense (tonight: knee-length football socks, pipecleaner jeans, Lacoste trainers and tweed coat), he cuts quite a dash' (*NME* 31 January 2004: 29). Finally, sometime during 2004, *NME* began to focus on Pete Doherty of The Libertines. In fact, it seemed that much of the British press – not merely the weekly music press – began to pay attention to Doherty.

While Doherty's band The Libertines first gained musical success in 2002, it was not until a few years later that the British press developed a fascination with the musician. Over the course of several years, Doherty made tabloid headlines for his drug use, for his burgling of Libertine's bandmate Carl Barat's apartment and, more generally, for his out-of-control lifestyle. Around this time, Hedi Slimane – head designer of Dior Homme – took an interest in Doherty. As early as 30 June 2001, Charlie Porter of *The Guardian* wrote, 'Slimane is heralding a more sensitive interpretation of male self-image, at odds with the pumped-up stereotype that has dominated menswear for the past two decades'. Several years later, referencing Slimane's designs, Janet Street-Porter wrote for *The Independent*,

Surely it is time that men were released from the tyranny of wearing clothes designed to reinforce old-fashioned notions of power and strength. [...] Our concept of what makes men attractive has moved on. It's OK to be a wimp (*The Independent* 1 February 2004: np).

Slimane, himself, identified his goal as creating a softer male silhouette, claiming in the abovementioned article by Porter, 'Muscles don't mean masculinity to me' (*The Guardian* 30 June 2001: np). Street-Porter outlined Slimane's alternative masculinity: 'Slimane's clothes are slender, shrunken, designed to drape and cling to bodies which do nothing more strenuous than lift a guitar or hold a cigarette' (*The Independent* 1 February 2004: np).

In Doherty, Slimane saw a muse for this alternative masculinity. As a result, his designs were inspired by Doherty's skinny, indie look. Hadley Freeman of *The Guardian* wrote, 'Slimane took his inspiration from...Pete Doherty...Suits were sharp as pins, yet cut extra skinny to look more cool than a City boy, and capes, pussy bows and hats were flamboyantly Libertine-esque' (*The Guardian* 4 February 2005: np). This was not the first time that a high fashion designer had taken inspiration from an indie musician and the indie look. Again, Marc Jacobs was using indie musicians in his Marc by Marc Jacobs advertisements, and much earlier still, Edward Enninful of *i-D* wrote,

In the world of fashion, rock'n'roll is now the new rock'n'roll. After the '80s chiseled jaw men, the early '90s traveler/crustie lads and last summer's inspid (sic) little waifs, enter the indie boy brigade. Just as well-dressed bands like Menswear are turning Britpop on its head with their finely-tuned posturing, so too are modelling's new stars. Designers like Dolce e Gabbana, Versace and Calvin Klein are employing these boys not to just to act as mannequins, but rather to inject a touch of old fashion rock glamour into their shows (*i-D* August 1995: 6).

What is significant about the Doherty-Slimane union is that there is also a great deal of evidence demonstrating how, although Doherty acted as Slimane's muse, Slimane had immense influence over Doherty's image. Photos taken at The Libertines' gigs before the establishment of the Slimane-Doherty union reveal a young man dressed in loose jeans and football shirts. After their union, however, Slimane dressed Doherty in slim suits, trilby hats and skinny, black ties. As a result, most, if not all, of the images of Doherty appearing in the British press were of a man fully clad in Dior Homme; his quintessentially indie look was tailor-made by a fashion designer. What Doherty brought to the look was his shambolic lifestyle. After the end of a gig, his tie would be loosened; after a weekend at Glastonbury, his suit trousers would be muddied.

Doherty's fashion influence was notable. On 11 July 2005 Hadley Freeman wrote for *The Guardian*,

...this year, the biggest trend [at Glastonbury] was a male one...the gentlemen wanted to look like Pete Doherty, 27, musician, one-man tabloid soap opera and one of the most pervasive fashion icons we've had for some time...Ripped vests, skinny jeans, braces, perhaps, or maybe an embroidered waistcoat and, of course, trilby hat: this was the general male fashion look of Glastonbury 2005 so that at times Worthy Farm looked as if it was the venue for some kind of Doherty lookalike event (incidentally, even Moss is following his lead these days, as she seems to be sewn into her skinny, pale black jeans and waistcoat) (*The Guardian* 11 July 2005: np).

Although fans of indie music had always put together certain looks, it was at this point in the middle of the 2000s that these looks became widely recognized as *fashionable* looks: that indie fans were, in William Leith's words from his 1986 article for *i-D*, 'bothered with all the fashion sophistication'. Moreover, as Freeman notes, it was becoming easier to put together the indie look. In *NME*'s descriptions of Julian Casablancas, Johnny Borrell and Caleb Followill's looks, for example, second-hand shops were identified as key sources for garments, and Doherty was seemingly always shown clad in Dior Homme. In addition to second-hand and high fashion sources, however, fans of indie also had the high street. Freeman wrote,

Even Topman has used [Doherty] as a template and, this autumn/winter, its entire collection is ripped faux-band T-shirts, ripped narrow jeans and hats, pre-beaten up, so there's no need to get into a fight on Commercial Road when you can buy this look ready made' (*The Guardian* 1 July 2005: np).

Here, 'Commercial Road' signifies an area of Whitechapel, East London that has a plethora of charity shops – second-hand shops that, hypothetically, Casablancas, Borrell and Followill might have frequented.

Whereas *NME* was enthusiastic about indie's newfound fashionability in the beginning part of the decade, the magazine began to question it by the middle of the decade. In the issue of *NME* that appeared on newsstands on 18 November 2006, Hamish MacBain – a regular contributor to the weekly music magazine – presented to his readers an account of the strange predicament in which indie had found itself. He wrote,

...the crux of the matter is this: 'indie' may once have been a byword for people with shaggy hair who considered themselves to be living outside of the mainstream, soundtracking their self confessed awkwardness with jangling guitars, but now it's everywhere. A bad thing? Perhaps not. You could say that the once neverending war waged on all that is popular has kind of been *won*, and all those 'indie' values absorbed. Isn't it sort of good that the bullies are now listening to the music of the kids they once would have bullied? That people like Kate Moss fancy people like Pete Doherty (because *he*, with his books of poetry and his lo-fi recordings, is *proper* indie)? That bands like The Rakes get asked to model at fashion shows? Maybe. But something has definitely, definitely gone (*NME* 18 November 2006: 34; emphasis in original).

In invoking a version of 1980s indie as proudly standing ‘outside of the mainstream’, celebratory of its own awkwardness, MacBain demonstrates a rejection of recent trends within indie music. His account is representative of a shift in *NME*’s discourse as well as of a more general shift in attitude towards fashion within the sub-field of indie music. Indeed, representations of indie from the music press – specifically *NME* – began to focus again solely on the musical aspects of indie, foregoing discussions of musicians’ ensembles. Chapters Five and Six of the present thesis problematize further this denial of the importance of fashion to the construction of indie music in relation to representations of contemporary indie and the male respondents’ discourses on the self. What is demonstrated in the following chapters is that this ‘rejection’ of fashion is ambiguous and ambivalent. Indeed, indie music continues to be constructed through an engagement with popular fashion in that stylists work on images of musicians and fans follow contemporary fashion trends. Further, MacBain’s account of contemporary indie, like Freeman’s (*The Guardian* 11 July 2005), brings attention to another way in which the connection between indie music and fashion was forged within the figure of Pete Doherty: that is, through his relationship with supermodel Kate Moss.

Moss has been celebrated for her unique looks since her emergence onto the international fashion scene in the 1990s. Indeed, she is the focus of Angela Buttolph’s (2008) book *Kate Moss: Style* that explores Moss’s unique style and her influence over contemporary fashion. Known to piece together her own outfits, often mixing high fashion garments given to her by designers with second-hand clothing, Moss is attributed with making second-hand shopping a fashionable practice (Buttolph 2008). A frequent attendee at summer music festivals, Moss’s festival ensembles have been regularly documented by the popular fashion press. Interest in Moss’s festival ensembles increased tenfold, moreover, during her three-year relationship with Doherty (2005-2007). During this period the term ‘festival fashion’ emerged within the discourse of the popular fashion press and, according to Hadley Freeman, Moss herself can be identified as starting the trend. In an article for *The Guardian* entitled ‘The world’s muddiest catwalk’, Freeman wrote,

Once upon a time, the words ‘festival’ and ‘beauty’ were not likely to be uttered in the same breath...But somehow – probably around the time Kate Moss slunk through the mud, displaying those delicately angled knees in a pair of shiny, grime-spattered wellies – everything changed. The bar was raised, then raised again (*The Guardian* 24 June 2005: np).

It can be argued, moreover, that Moss’ most iconic ‘festival fashion’ looks to date appeared

in the following years during her relationship with Doherty. As touched upon by Freeman, in 2005 Moss appeared in a pair of hotpants worn with wellies and a 'rock-chick' black waistcoat – a look that caught the eye of festival-goers and fashion journalists alike.

Writing a guide to 'Festival fashion and how to master it' for *The Guardian* four years after Moss's iconic look, Fiona Sibley explained,

Kate Moss, our ultimate rock chick, is without doubt every girl's fashion compass when packing the bag for Glastonbury. Where Kate leads, others unquestioningly follow. [...] This was Kate's classic Hunter wellies and micro shorts look in 2005, a look which spawned a thousand slavish devotees. But the waistcoat was something Kate was wearing then: it's now 2009 and time for something different (*The Guardian* 8 May 2009: np).

This quotation brings attention to the fact that representations of 'festival fashion' have continued and evolved – a point that is problematized in greater detail in the following two chapters. Chapter Five explores contemporary representations of 'festival fashion' in relation to 'street style' images, and Chapter Six examines to what extent the subject positions created within these representations are inhabited by the female interview respondents. The notion of 'style' serves as a context for both of these discussions. Indeed, as the above-discussion has introduced, Moss is produced within music media discourse as well as in Buttolph's (2008) book as someone with personal style. 'Style' is thus problematized within the following chapters.

It is popularly understood to be because of her 'personal style' that Moss was chosen to develop a collection for Topshop in 2006 based upon outfits from her own wardrobe. Topshop's approval of Moss' style did not come as a surprise. Susie Rushton wrote in *The Independent* on 1 May 2007, 'Known as much for her effortless style of dress as her romance with Pete Doherty, Moss was the obvious candidate for her own fashion range...[She is] credited with launching trends for skinny jeans, tiny denim shorts and men's waistcoats' (*The Independent* 1 May 2007: np). Indeed, the store had been selling for some time these 'Kate Moss trends' as well as indie-look garments. Again, in Freeman's (*The Guardian* 11 July 2005) article on the fashion influence of Doherty, she noted that Topshop offered indie-look garments. It can be argued further that the then creative director of Topshop – Jane Shepherdson – actively constructed Topshop's 'identity' in a way that greater resembles the discursive construction of the indie look. Not only did the store begin to sell the garments appropriate for the construction of the indie look, but the way in which Shepherdson defined the store's ethos draws on the notions of 'mixing and matching' and 'effortlessness' – notions that stand at the centre of the above-quoted descriptions of the looks of Jarvis Cocker, Damon Albarn, Brett Anderson, The Strokes and Pete Doherty. In an interview with Nick Mathiason of *The Observer* on 9 October 2005, for

example, Shepherdson discussed the way British people shop: she said, 'It is this mixture of things and this savvy ability to know how to mix pieces' (*The Observer* 9 October 2005: np). Along these same lines, in an interview with Sarah Mower for *The Independent* on 18 September 2005, Shepherdson detailed the overall aesthetic goal of Topshop. She said, 'We don't do pretty, that's the thing. We're not very good at that "going out" or "lady" thing...Because there's something intrinsically uncool about looking like you've tried too hard, isn't there?' (*The Independent* 18 September 2005: np).

That Topshop's 'identity' is created through the notions of 'mixing and matching' and 'effortlessness' is significant because it signals a breakdown of the boundary between second-hand and high street sources. Within the descriptions of indie musicians cited within this chapter, their 'effortless', 'mix-and-match' looks were understood to have been produced from garments sourced in second-hand shops. 'Mixing and matching' and 'effortlessness' are not characteristics that have heretofore been associated with high street stores. Shepherdson challenges this distinction, however. She explained in an interview with Polly Vernon for *The Observer* that she 'constantly visits thrift stores and vintage markets. I take in a lot of the detailing, then find a manufacturer who can copy them' (*The Observer* 13 October 2002: np). This relationship between second-hand and high street clothing sources is problematized throughout the remainder of this thesis. Specifically, Chapter Five explores the way in which Topshop draws on the notion of 'style' in the creation of its 'identity', and Chapter Seven examines the position of second-hand clothing sources within the contemporary field of popular fashion.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to tell the story of indie's evolution from its emergence in the early 1980s until the present day. Although the chapter has paid attention to music, it focused predominantly on the role of clothing and fashion in the construction of indie. Indeed, although those people participating in the indie scene have always worn a look, in the 1990s this look was consecrated within the alternative style press, and by 2001 it had gained symbolic value throughout the field of popular fashion in the UK. This chapter thus charts, not only the changing nature of the discursive construction of indie and indie subjectivity, but also the increasing interconnectedness of the sub-field of indie music and the field of popular fashion in the UK.

That these two fields are interconnected serves as a foundation for the discussion of the evolution of indie from 2001 onwards. In presenting indie's story from this point onwards, the chapter has introduced several themes that are problematized throughout the remaining chapters: a masculine music-based 'rejection' of fashion, the increasing

Chapter 4

significance of 'style' to the construction and experience of contemporary fashion for women and the changing relationship between second-hand and high street clothing sources. On the one hand, these issues extend beyond indie, implicating a variety of histories, which are also discussed in the following chapters. On the other hand, indie serves as a locus through which these themes can be problematized. As the following chapters show, the present thesis explores contemporary indie, whilst simultaneously using it as an access point into an exploration of contemporary popular fashion culture.

Chapter Five

Representing indie: Discourses of 'authenticity' and 'style'

This chapter considers, to borrow Hall's (1997c) phrase, the 'work of representation'. It analyzes contemporary representations of indie and attempts to answer the question, what objects, subjects and subject positions are discursively constituted within these representations? In so doing, it draws attention to two related, yet distinct, discourses: a discourse of 'authenticity' and a discourse of 'style'. The discourses are related in that they similarly signify 'resistance'. Both 'authenticity' and 'style' are constituted in opposition to the notion of 'fashion'; however, in both cases such a 'rejection' of fashion is far from straightforward, as the fashion industry, fashion industry professionals and popular fashion garments are implicated in the construction of the two discourses. The discourses distinguish themselves from one another, however, in that the former creates a space for the construction of masculine subjectivity and the latter for feminine subjectivity. Thus, this chapter explores the gendered discourses of contemporary representations of indie. Further, in exploring representations of indie from a range of popular fashion and music print media, the chapter draws attention to the interconnections between the sub-field of indie music and the field of popular fashion in the UK as well as to a re-organization of the symbolic value systems and hierarchies of the field of popular fashion.

1. Representing indie musicians

In the preceding chapter, 2001 was identified as the point in time when the field of fashion and the sub-field of indie music became firmly fused together, as indie musicians, like Julian Casablancas of The Strokes and Pete Doherty, were consecrated as fashion icons by journalists, designers and fashion editors. Moreover, indie music had become incorporated into popular fashion, as popular indie tracks served as the background music piping throughout Topshop and other high street shopping sources as well as at a variety of fashion shows for labels like Luella. The history of indie presented in the preceding chapter tells the story of a predominantly male cultural formation – a story that was, moreover, written mostly by male journalists. With the exception of Justine Frischmann of Elastica, none of the indie musicians discussed in the preceding chapter were women.

This point does not exclude the possibility of women participating in indie culture as fans; however, it does affect the way in which indie was represented within the music, style and fashion media throughout this period from the 1980s until the mid-2000s.

Representations of indie were, for the most part, representations of men, and the fact that indie culture was incorporated into the field of fashion is a matter that concerned the construction of indie masculinity, as well as the construction of masculinity, more generally.

One could place an analysis of recent representations of indie musicians in dialogue with Nixon's (1996, 1997) work on 'new man' images, specifically in relation to the extent to which they similarly create new 'fashionable' subject positions for men. The two sets of representations share aesthetic features. For example, as mentioned in the literature review (Chapter One), through the casting of young, tough looking models, 'new man' masculinity is coded as a combination of 'boyish softness and a harder, assertive masculinity' (Nixon 1997: 313). 'Boyish softness' is coded into representations of male indie musicians, as well. As discussed in the preceding chapter in relation to Hedi Slimane's reworking of the male silhouette based upon Pete Doherty's skinny bodily frame, the indie male body is a boyish one – a characteristic that recalls Reynolds's (1989) reading of the indie look as child-like. Contemporary representations of male indie musicians work in a drastically different way to Nixon's 'new man' images, however. Through the clothing worn by and the postures taken by the musicians, fashionable display is denied explicitly. Indeed, contemporary representations of male indie musicians work to promote a 'rejection' of popular fashion in a way that resembles Reynolds's (1989) reading of the indie look of the 1980s.

This 'rejection' of popular fashion can be understood in relation to the shifting value system of the sub-field of indie music within the latter part of the 2000s. Although *NME* – a weekly music magazine that has largely been identified with indie music for the past thirty years – championed indie music's newfound fashionability from 2001-2004, providing readers with advice on how to recreate Julian Casablancas look, by 2006 *NME* journalist, Hamish MacBain wrote, 'something has definitely, definitely gone' as the result of the fact that indie musicians were at this point dating supermodels and walking in catwalk shows (*NME* 18 November 2006: 34). 'Fashion', it seemed, had undermined the 'authenticity' of indie. Following on from this point, this section argues that contemporary representations of male indie musicians produce a discourse of 'authenticity', reaffirming indie's 'rejection' of fashion and clothing. In his discussion of the imaging of an 'authentic' country music image, Richard Peterson (1997: 5) suggests that 'authenticity' is 'fabricated'. He continues, 'authenticity is not inherent in the object or event that is

designated authentic but is a socially agreed-upon construction which the past is to a degree misremembered' (1997: 5). He uses a discussion of how in the 1920s and 1930s country music 'authenticity' was constituted through an 'old-timer' image that used clothing, props and stage performances to create a visual representation of what country music was misremembered to have been. The image of contemporary indie music is similarly constructed in relation to a (mis)remembered past – one in which indie is understood to have been disassociated with the fashion industry.

However, this discourse of 'authenticity' is based on a contradiction in that, not least because of wider shifts in the relationship between 'sound and vision' (Frith, Goodwin and Grossberg 1993) within music culture, clothing and popular fashion continue to be integral components in the construction of contemporary indie. Moreover, these contemporary representations of male indie musicians can be placed in dialogue with contemporary representations of female indie musicians, which contrastingly work to celebrate visual appearance in relation to the construction of musical personae. For example, images of and articles about Florence Welch of the indie band Florence + the Machine, appearing across a range of contemporary media publications, work to represent Welch as a young woman who is not only 'dressing up' for the stage, but is actively creating her own look. In other words, she is represented as someone who is interested in clothing and fashion on both professional and personal levels.

That this section builds an argument about representations of female indie musicians based on those of Florence Welch points to a continued gender imbalance within indie. Making an argument that is just as relevant today as it was ten years ago, Davies (2001: 302) writes that the British music press consistently ignores female musicians. She continues, 'The vast majority of music journalists are male, and it is unsurprising that they should tend to admire the artists with whom they can most identify, i.e. the men' (2001: 302). Davies's (2001) argument resembles Frith and McRobbie's (1990 [1978]) pioneering work on rock. Although Frith (1990 [1985]) has since qualified the arguments he made with McRobbie, their statement that 'rock is a male form' (1990 [1978]: 373) remains accurate. That indie should be considered 'rock' as opposed to 'pop' is perhaps somewhat surprising, as the preceding chapter reported that some male indie musicians from the 1980s identified themselves as 'pop' musicians. However, the facts that indie has been a male form (see Bannister 2006 for a discussion of 1980s indie as a space for the formation of masculine identities) and that a discourse of 'authenticity' circulates within the contemporary sub-field of indie music point to indie's alignment with 'rock' as opposed to 'pop'. In contrast, representations of Florence Welch serve to produce a discourse of 'style' as opposed to that of indie 'authenticity'. As a result,

these representations of Welch function as an introduction into the second part of this chapter, which explores the way in which this discourse on 'style' constructs a feminine subjectivity and is pervasive throughout the contemporary field of popular fashion in the UK.

Although this section of the chapter highlights the differences in the ways in which male and female indie musicians are represented, it is important to acknowledge a common thread across the contemporary representations of both male and female indie musicians collected between May and October 2009: a failure to credit the stylist. Chapter Seven addresses in greater detail the work of the stylist and other 'cultural intermediaries' (Bourdieu 1984) functioning within the contemporary field of popular fashion and the sub-field of indie music. As will be discussed in Chapter Seven, the professional position of the stylist is relatively new: its emergence linked to the style publications of the 1980s and 1990s (*i-D*, *The Face* and *Dazed & Confused*, for example; see McRobbie 1998, Nixon 1996). Today, however, stylists work across a range of positions in the contemporary fashion industry: styling musicians and celebrities, styling fashion editorials, styling catwalk shows and, in the specific case of Katie Grand, running a niche fashion magazine. Here, it is significant to note that the work of the stylist goes without acknowledgement within contemporary representations of indie musicians. This lack of acknowledgement serves different purposes within representations of male and female indie musicians, however. Within representations of male indie musicians, that the stylist is unacknowledged is one of the means through which the significance of popular fashion and clothing to the construction of indie is devalued. That is, male indie musicians are represented as 'uninterested' in fashion and clothing. In contrast, within representations of Florence Welch, the stylist's work is unacknowledged in an attempt to represent Welch as someone who is styling herself – as someone who is interested in the creative possibilities afforded through an engagement with dress and appearance. This analysis demonstrates that representations of male and female indie musicians reproduce stereotypical gender roles.

1.1. Contemporary representations of male indie musicians: a discourse of 'authenticity'

Contemporary indie is produced across a range of sites: gigs, performances, festivals, radio and music television, for example. Of particular interest to the present research is the way in which indie is produced across a range of media publications. Shuker (2008) brings attention to the different forms of music media: 'industry reference tools, musicians' magazines, record collector magazines, fanzines, "teen glossies", "the inkies", style bibles and the new tabloids' (2008: 161). Additional to Shuker's list, a variety of websites – such as pitchfork.com – cover music, as well as personal blogs. Articles about musicians also

appear within contemporary style magazines, niche fashion magazines and even high fashion magazines for women. For example, an issue of *Elle* (October 2009) collected as part of the empirical research project included an article about, and a fashion editorial featuring, Peter Doherty. A variety of contemporary media publications thus share an interest in, and work to represent, indie music culture. Within these representations, written text is accompanied by one of two forms of photo: an 'in action' gig shot or a staged press shot. Within the data collected for this research, the former form of visual representation appeared solely within the music press, whereas the latter appeared within the music press as well as within style, lifestyle and high fashion media.

Within 'in action' gig shots, indie musicians are often featured either with a guitar or other instrument in hand or belting into a microphone. These images serve as a visual representation of what one would see at a gig if one had been there. That is, the musical performance is captured in visual form. Grossberg (1993) argues that the live performance is central to the construction of 'authenticity' within rock. He writes,

The authenticity of rock has always been measured by its sound and, most commonly, by its voice. [...] the importance of live performances lies precisely in the fact that it is only here that one can see the actual production of the sound, and the emotional work carried in the voice. [...] The demand for live performance has always expressed the desire for the visual mark (and proof) of authenticity (1993: 204).

Following Grossberg's (1993) analysis, it could be argued that 'in action' shots of indie musicians work to constitute 'authenticity' by representing the 'emotional' work invested in the acts of playing instruments and singing into the microphone. Further, the musicians' ensembles contribute to this construction, as the musicians are often featured with sweat-stained clothes that are disheveled and falling off of their bodies – a visible marker of the physical work of the performance.

Images from an impromptu Libertines reunion in *NME* (30 May 2009) serve as examples of the way clothing is implicated in the construction of 'authenticity' within 'in action' representations of indie musicians (*Figure 1*; following page). The magazine feature takes the reader through the night of the gig, identifying each photograph by the time of early morning at which it was taken. Between 2:40am and 2:42am, Peter Doherty shed the overcoat he was wearing over his black suit, collared shirt and skinny tie. By 2:46am his hair, emerging from under his black trilby, was stuck to his forehead. By 3:00am Doherty was crowd-surfing with his shirt un-tucked from his trousers. And by 3:03am his former band-mate, Carl Barat, had shed his gray suit jacket as well. McLaughlin (2000: 269) writes that there is 'the tendency within a rock culture...to see clothes as the "veneer", as essentially fickle, to "look through them", to value what is

inside'. This rock ideology manifests in the images of Doherty and Barat. That is, the clothes are literally shed as the musicians reunite – an act that was seen to be cathartic for the estranged band-mates as well as for Libertines-fans at the gig and reading the magazine.



Figure 1: 'Libertines Reunited.' *NME*. 30 May 2009.

Clothing is rarely addressed by music magazine editors in the captions to these 'in action' images. When it is addressed, moreover, it is addressed in a mocking tone. For example, an article about Underage Festival – a one-day music festival for under-eighteen-year-olds – that appeared in *NME* (15 August 2009) features a variety of images of bands and musicians 'in action' during the day's events, playing music and performing on stage. The collection of images also includes a photo of a group of girls who attended the event. The girls are dressed in plaid and denim shirts, denim shorts, crop tops, plimsolls, leggings and Wayfarers. Four of the girls pictured are wearing denim shorts, and one is wearing black leggings. The accompanying caption reads, 'Someone didn't get the "shorts only" group text' (*NME* 15 August 2009: 46). In including this image of the young girls dressed in trendy garments, the publication acknowledges that dressing for a festival has become in recent years a significant means through which to participate in indie. Nonetheless, the image's mocking tone works to produce a discourse that devalues this mode of participation. Indeed, that all of the other images in the article feature musicians in

performance emphasizes the intended message of conveying these young women as silly. Music is something to report on, fashion is something to laugh at. Moreover, that the image featured young women is significant as it implicates gender within the criticism. The link between fashion, festivals and femininity is returned to at a later section of the chapter as well as within the following chapter.

Staged press shots work slightly differently to 'in action' shots in that they are more straightforwardly constructed images. The photographs are frequently taken inside a studio or other controlled environment, and the musicians pictured are positioned in such a way as to create an even composition. Within these images, moreover, the musicians pose for the camera. Mauss's (1973) concept 'techniques of the body' is a useful tool when thinking through the precise ways in which indie musicians pose within staged press shots. Mauss suggests that 'there is perhaps no "natural way" for the adult' (1973: 74) to hold or move his/her body. In contrast, he argues that body postures are informed by social knowledges and norms: 'by all his education, by the whole society to which he belongs, in the place he occupies in it' (1973: 76). Mauss argues further that 'These actions are more or less habitual' (1973: 86) – a point that is drawn on by Bourdieu (1977, 1984) in his development of the concept 'habitus'.

It could be argued that indie musicians engage in specific, socially agreed-upon 'techniques of the body' when posing for press shots *and* when performing in concert – 'techniques of the body' that form part of the indie musician's habitus. The way in which Doherty and Barat shed their garments over the course of their reunion gig can be understood as a 'technique of the body', for example. Further, one of the 'techniques of the body' employed by indie musicians within press shots is that of *not* smiling. Indeed, musicians working within a range of musical genres shed their clothing within performance and refuse to smile when posing for press shots. It could be argued, therefore, that these 'techniques of the body' are part of a wider habitus related to the field of music, and not solely to the sub-field of indie music. The former technique works to reiterate the lack of importance given to clothing within musical performance. The latter technique – that of refusing to smile – produces a feeling of seriousness within the image. Davies (2001) argues further, this 'seriousness' is constituted through the clothing worn by musicians within press shots. She explains,

The degree to which an artist's music is viewed as 'serious' is often inversely proportional to the extent to which their image is foregrounded. Male bands wishing to be taken seriously almost without exception adopt the dowdy indie uniform of jeans and T-shirts, in order to imply that their music is the most important thing to them (2001: 306).

Adding to Davies's argument, within staged press shots young male musicians do not merely 'adopt the dowdy indie uniform of jeans and T-shirts'; rather, these young men are *styled* in such ensembles by professional stylists.

An interview with Alan, who is in charge of publicity for the London-based second-hand chain store Beyond Retro, brings attention to the work of stylists and photographers in the construction of such 'dowdy' ensembles for indie musicians. Alan's work as a 'cultural intermediary' (Bourdieu 1984) is analyzed in greater detail in Chapter Seven. Here, his observations of the styling of male indie musicians are analyzed. Discussing various photoshoots for male 'indie' musicians, Alan stated,

Alan: Well, in terms of indie publications, we deal with...a lot of music magazines, like *NME* and *Spin* and *Rolling Stone* sometimes, and the...I find that the stylists tend to request...in terms of menswear, it's all quite conservative. It's all...there's very much a uniform, you know, the jeans and t-shirt, sneakers and plaid shirt...and it just kind of sticks to that. It varies from month to month in terms of what might be on a t-shirt or whether they want colour or not, but that is pretty much as far as it will go in terms of menswear.

Rachel Lifter (RL): And this is for images of the bands?

Alan: Yeah, generally I just loan the clothes, so they generally come in to dress the bands up, and often it will be...like in terms of indie, it's mostly boybands, so the boys are very, very conservative in terms of how far they'll go with fashion.

[...]

Alan: I mean, recently, the grunge references are quite heavy, so they're changing what might be on a t-shirt and the size of the jeans: less skinny, larger jeans, often ripped. So that, you know, has not been a massive change, but that's been the most marked thing that I've noticed.

Alan's comments on, what he calls, the 'uniform' of male 'indie' musicians complement Davies's (2001: 301) point regarding 'the dowdy indie uniform of jeans and T-shirts' being utilized in order to produce a 'seriousness' of the image. Moreover, within the creation of such images, stylists' creative labour is completely unacknowledged. Indeed, in the images collected from music magazines such as *NME*, there were no bylines identifying the sources for garments or the stylist working on an image. Yet, it is clear from Alan's discussion that not only are stylists working to construct 'uniform' ensembles to be featured in music media representations, but they are also employing precise criteria in their processes of choosing. To borrow from Breward's (1999: 60) response to the argument that men had renounced fashion since the Industrial revolution, the construction of the 'indie uniform' in fact relies upon 'a hidden language of clothing demanding the "connoisseur's eye"'. This 'connoisseur's eye' is addressed in greater detail in the following sub-section.



Figure 2: "The Hugs." Interview. August 2009. Text Paige Powell. Photography Gus van Sant. Styling Beth Fenton.

In contrast, in a feature on the Seattle-based band The Hugs that appeared in the American lifestyle/niche fashion magazine *Interview* (August 2009: 28), the stylist and the sources of the garments are identified in a byline to the image (Figure 2). As a lifestyle magazine, *Interview* addresses music alongside other themes, such as style and fashion, and thus the magazine takes a decidedly more open and celebratory approach to fashion/appearance than the music press. Nonetheless, within this feature, visual appearance is de-emphasized. A short article is complemented with a photo of the four male band members taken in, what seems to be, a music studio. The photo is taken from a vantage point above the young men, and, although the top halves of their ensembles are visible, the bottom halves cannot be seen. This positioning of the young musicians in a way that obscures many of the featured garments suggests that the clothing worn is not actually that important within the feature. In an analysis of British fashion designers, McRobbie (1998: 162) argues that within fashion media representations the creation of the fashion image is prioritized over the marketing of the actual clothes. In fashioning this image of the Hugs to produce the notion of indie 'authenticity', this image does indeed obscure the actual clothes. The clothing used in the shoot *and* the creative work demonstrated in order to produce the fashioned image seem to play a secondary role,

working to construct a visual representation of the musicians whilst not being a primary focus of the image.

Instead, the primary focus of the image of The Hugs and the accompanying article is the musicians' personalities. Sennett's (2002 [1977]) concept of the 'authentic self' can be used to frame an analysis of the way in which representations of male indie musicians use the 'indie uniform' to signify the musicians' 'personalities'. As discussed in the theoretical framework (Chapter Two), according to Sennett, because of sweeping societal changes that occurred because of the growth of capitalism and the changing nature of secularism in the 19th Century, appearances have come to be understood as 'direct expressions of the "inner" self. That is, personality is immanent in appearances' (Sennett 2002 [1977]: 153). However, Chapter Two of this thesis suggested that within contemporary indie the discourse of the 'authentic' self is one that is relevant only to the experience of indie masculinity. In contrast, following Tseëlon (1995), this thesis explores the way in which indie femininity is experienced in relation to changing and multiple selves – a point that is developed further in the following chapter. This gendered distinction is equally relevant to an analysis of the representation of indie. That is, styled representations of contemporary male indie musicians work to code personality as 'immanent in appearances'. That is, they attempt to represent these male musicians in a way that seems as if they are not 'dressing up' in costume, but rather are revealing their personalities – their 'inner' selves – through their appearance. Those people viewing the image are not meant to see the styling work that has been undertaken in order to construct these representations of musicians' personalities, but rather are meant to understand what they see to be a visual manifestation of the musicians as they 'really are'. Who they 'really are' are people who are seemingly uninterested in fashion.

This point can be seen further in relation to two features from the music magazine *Q* in which it seemed that the ensembles worn by the musicians were, perhaps, too obviously constructed and thus the 'naturalness' of the musicians' appearances was potentially undermined. An image of the band Arctic Monkeys that appeared in *Q* shows the lead singer – Alex Turner – wearing suede moccasins and another band member holding his hands into a gun-shape, pointing this 'gun' at Turner. The caption accompanying the image reads, 'Lose the slippers, Turner, or else...' (*Q* September 2009: 74). Similarly, the image of the band Phoenix that appeared in the same issue of *Q* positions the band, wearing woolen sweaters, standing above a fire. The accompanying caption reads, 'Hopefully that inferno is for their knitwear' (*Q* September 2009: 89). What is interesting about contemporary indie, therefore, is that a stereotypical masculine disassociation from fashion and appearance continues to be reproduced. Whereas the

skinny bodily frames of indie musicians to an extent point to new masculine subjectivities, the discourse of 'authenticity' that is produced within representations of male indie musicians points to the fact that, in the case of indie, a stereotypical masculine 'rejection' of fashion remains unchallenged.

1.2. Fashioning *indie* 'authenticity'

These representations of 'authenticity' are constructed using the tools of popular fashion culture, however. Although the work of the stylist is, for the most part, unacknowledged within representations of male indie musicians, s/he plays a significant role within the creation of the image. In the previously cited quotation, Alan spoke about the 'uniform' of male indie musicians. In so doing, however, he also brought attention to the specificities of stylists' demands. The seemingly small details he notes – the image on a shirt or the tightness of the jeans – point attention to, to use McRobbie's (1989b: 29) phrasing, 'the very precise tastes and desires' of the stylists. Indeed, stylists possess a level of expertise in relation to choosing garments to be used within particular images placed in specific contexts: skills used not only to create representations of male indie musicians, but also to create fashion images. Accordingly, often stylists work across the fields of fashion and music. For example, Alan identified Celestine Cooney as Florence Welch's stylist at the time, and Chapter Seven examines an editorial she styled for the September 2009 issue of *Dazed & Confused*. Moreover, often those people creating images of male indie musicians are prominently positioned within the field of fashion. For example, throughout his interview, Alan was carrying four pairs of jeans he had collected for, what he called, 'an indie boy shoot' that was going to be shot by Hedi Slimane for the niche men's fashion magazine *Man About Town*. Thus, images of male indie musicians are literally *fashioned* by professional stylists: by agents within the contemporary field of popular fashion.

Further, the clothing used to style indie musicians is fashionable dress. As is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven, Beyond Retro should not be considered to be an alternative shopping source whose garments signify a rejection of 'fashion' from the catwalks and the high street. Instead, Beyond Retro actively works to align its garments aesthetically with those on the high street, featuring in-store 'trends', such as playsuits and tartan shirts. Moreover, Beyond Retro garments are styled into fashion editorials across a range of popular fashion magazines – a discursive act that works to constitute Beyond Retro garments as 'fashionable'. Beyond Retro is not the only source for garments to be used in images of male indie musicians, of course. As is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, one of the male respondents to the present research – Dave – was a member of a London-based band and had an experience in which he had been styled in a

Levi's jacket for a press shot. Representations of indie musicians thus draw on the material tools of popular fashion culture in order to create images.

That contemporary representations of indie 'authenticity' should be understood to be *fashioned* images makes sense in relation to wider shifts in the relationship between music – specifically, rock music – and fashion that have occurred over the past fifty years. Frith and Horne (1987) and Lawrence Grossberg (1993) similarly problematize how the increasing significance of the visual within music culture has influenced the way in which 'authenticity' takes shape within rock. Focusing on the emergence of the music video in the 1980s, Grossberg argues 'that the ideology of authenticity is increasingly irrelevant to contemporary taste' (1993: 203). He continues,

As the visual media have incorporated and foregrounded many of the postmodern aesthetic practices (often unselfconsciously part of rock culture), the possibility and even the value of authenticity is further called into question. For what these new visual formations of youth culture make clear is that authenticity is something that is always constructed (1993: 204).

Frith and Horne (1987) similarly pinpoint postmodernism as a context for the destabilization of rock 'authenticity'; however, they locate the beginnings of this destabilization in an earlier history. Frith and Horne (1987) present a historicized account of popular music in the UK from the 1960s until the 1980s, placing at the centre of this history 'the replacement of a rock by a pop sensibility' (1987: 151). For the authors, rock was constructed as 'serious, progressive, truthful, and individual' (1987: 90). In contrast, a 'pop sensibility' is defined by the acceptance of 'the "commercial" and "inauthentic" nature of pop' (1987: 110).

Without using the term, Alan discussed the 'pop sensibility' of some male indie musicians within his interview, specifically The Horrors.

RL: What do you think about the relationship between music and fashion?

Alan: Well, I think the key...in recent times in London especially, in terms of something that...a band that really launched the career of the look might be The Horrors. Um...of course not in any way derogatory because they get a lot of their clothes from here also, but their look was key in terms of launching them...in terms of fashion press...and the music really seemed to follow to me. So I think that there's a lot of groups that it's very useful...a very useful form of marketing...

RL: Useful this relationship?

Alan: Yeah, the relationship it can be...for people who know how and who aren't phased and intimidated...obviously there are a lot of respectable musicians who don't like to engage with that at all, but in a lot of senses it's to their detriment because...it's more difficult to get the message that they exist out to a wide circle of people...lifestyle magazines – although, all right they're not doing brilliantly – there are a lot closing down at the moment.

Later in the interview, Alan discussed the fact that at the time The Horrors were

sponsored by denim label April 77. At the same time that he identifies The Horrors as a band that is successfully using appearance and associations with the commercial fashion industry in order to promote itself, Alan simultaneously reproduces a discourse of 'authenticity' by signalling that his discussion of the attention the band puts into visual appearance could be understood as 'derogatory'. When The Horrors first album – *Strange House* – came out in 2007, the band received much attention: however, less for their music and more for their visual appearances. The five male band members dress in a gothic style, primarily wearing black clothing. Moreover, all members are extremely skinny, their bodies giving off a fashionably deathly look. However, the importance of The Horrors' look to their popularity is disavowed within an article that appeared in the American style/youth lifestyle magazine *Nylon Guys*. The author – Krissi Murison (the female editor-in-chief of *NME* at the time of thesis-completion in 2012) – wrote,

The Horrors, you see, love music. Snobbishly, obsessively, and compulsively. [...] music has always been the glue that bonded them. They love it more than they love dressing up. [...] until their second album, *Primary Colours*, leaked last month to a gasp of incredulity, the top line on The Horrors was that they were flash-in-the-pan London scenesters with silly names. A band more interested in keeping their comic-goth hair in place than sitting down to write a record worthy of the column inches they'd wracked up in their short, whirlwind careers. Which, of course, was never really fair. Yes, they looked fabulous, recognizable at 50 paces with their three-foot manes, cigarette-thin legs, and expertly applied panda eyes. But anyone who actually bothered to listen to their 2007 debut, *Strange House*, discovered a vital attack of primal garage punk, reflected through their love affair with stylish '60s girl groups and reverb-addled surf rock. Perhaps not the greatest record in the world, but a triumphantly inescapable opening shot nonetheless (*Nylon Guys* July 2009: 97).

She uses a discussion of the look to help build a portrait of The Horrors – as a method for emphasizing their distinctiveness; however, she simultaneously devalues the importance of their appearance by stressing overtly how the band members are talented and interested in music.

The example of The Horrors brings to attention the fact that the terms of indie 'authenticity' have changed. The dilemma Alan presents regarding whether or not contemporary indie musicians should work to create a 'look' alongside their music mirrors the dilemma faced by indie musicians working in the 'indie ghetto' of the 1980s, which was discussed in the preceding chapter. That is, in the 1980s, indie musicians were faced with the choice of, on the one hand, remaining 'independent' and perhaps never gaining widespread popularity or, on the other hand, 'selling out' to a major record label and having the potential to become famous. Today, indie musicians are faced with the choice of, on the one hand, focusing solely on their music and perhaps never gaining widespread visibility or, on the other hand, creating a 'look' for themselves and potentially

receiving press coverage from a range of media publications outside of the traditional music media. This point is analysed further in the following chapter in relation to Dave's interview; as a member of an indie band, he revealed within the interview his experiences of being styled for a photoshoot and negotiating with a fashion label for a sponsorship. What becomes clear in relation to the example of The Horrors, however, is that, even when a band does use fashion and appearance in order to promote itself, this act is often overlooked in order to promote the band's 'authenticity', as in the case of Murison's article.

1.3. Contemporary representations of female indie musicians: a discourse of 'style'

To a certain extent, indie reproduces the gender codes generic to popular music cultures. This point makes sense not only in relation to the representations of male indie musicians, discussed above, but also in relation to the role of women within indie music. As Miller (2011: 54) notes, popular music is produced by an 'industry which largely values female musicians as visual images rather than producers of music' (see also Whiteley 2000). In this way, Miller continues, 'the patterns of female behaviour that are sanctioned by the music industry echo the roles and behaviours stereotypically legitimated for women in Western society generally' (2011: 54).

That women serve a visual role within indie music is evidenced in the example of Karen O from indie band Yeah Yeah Yeahs. Throughout the band's ten-year history, frontwoman Karen O has been known for her elaborate stage costumes, whereas her two male bandmates don the 'indie uniform'. In the video for the single 'Heads Will Roll' (2009), for example, O is wearing a shiny, red, body-conscious mini-dress with matching sleeves to wear over her forearms. Over the dress, she wears a sheer, plastic mini-dress that is covered in silver studs and is tailored to have balloon-like puffs over her shoulders. In contrast, the two male band members are wearing black trousers and black, button-down shirts. Similarly, in an image of the band post-gig that appeared in *i-D*, O is wearing a sleeveless, black, studded, body-conscious dress layered over a long-sleeved, black, fishnet body suit (*i-D* June/July 2009: 84-85). Again, the two male band-members are wearing black t-shirts and black jeans. O's appearance does not appear as 'unconcern'; instead, she appears to be in costume. Of course, not all female musicians within indie wear elaborate costumes. However, it would seem that those who do also receive the most attention: during the period of research, Karen O, Lovefoxx from Brazilian indie band CSS and, of particular significant to this thesis, Florence Welch of Florence + the Machine.

Representations of Florence Welch appeared across a range of popular fashion and music print media sources during the empirical research period, not least because her

band's first album debuted in July 2009. Significantly, Welch appeared in a variety of popular fashion media publications, including *i-D*, *Elle* and *The Sunday Times Style Magazine*, along with the daily papers, *The London Paper* and *London Lite*. In all of the articles, attention is paid as much (if not more) to her look as it is to her music. For example, in a segment called 'My stylish life' that appeared in *Elle*, Welch is asked a series of questions about her music alongside questions about her interests, specifically related to dress. Welch describes her choice of stage costumes,

The label [Kaviar Gauche] does these amazing dramatic dresses with really, really long sleeves, which I like to float around in on stage – it's important for the crowd to see a spectacle. I used to perform in just a pair of leggings and a T-shirt, but the gigs have changed. Back then it was just me standing there singing and banging a drum. Now I feel like it's a bigger thing, and I can lose myself in the music more if I'm wearing an insane frock (*Elle* October 2009: 159).

Welch's discussion of the importance of clothing to the embodied experience of performing stands in contrast to the representations of male indie musicians discussed above, which worked to deemphasize the importance of clothing to performance. Not only is clothing acknowledged to be a major component within Welch's musical performance, but it is also identified to be an important aspect of Welch's own identity. In the same *Elle* article, she is asked to describe her style. She replies,

It drifts from 1990s rock to 1970s to 1920s. I'm quite experimental. At Reading...I spent a day in a Zandra Rhodes clown suit I borrowed from someone's camper van. I loved it so much it ended up being in my video for *Dog Days*. I raid a lot of charity shops and buy vintage from London's Beyond Retro and Retromania in Vauxhall. I bought a black turban and a pair of checked shorts from Beyond Retro about two hours ago (*Elle* October 2009: 159).

Such a response draws attention to Welch's knowledge of retro fashion labels and hip second-hand stores; however, it masks the role played by her stylist in the construction of her look. Within interview, Alan from Beyond Retro discussed not only the specific instance of collecting jeans for a Hedi Slimane shoot, but also working with Welch's stylist to construct her ensembles. Like in representations of male indie musicians, representations of Welch from 2009 fail to acknowledge the role of the stylist. Indeed, within contemporary popular music in general, the work of the stylist is hardly ever mentioned. The exception, of course, is Lady Gaga's stylist Nicola Formichetti, whose role in the Haus of Gaga is frequently reported on within the popular fashion press. In the case of Welch, however, it is not merely that the work of the stylist is unacknowledged, but that Welch's appearance is represented as something that she crafts and creates herself.

Like male indie musicians, Welch's appearance is linked to her 'individual identity'.

Unlike male indie musicians, however, whose appearances represent who they ‘really are’ inside, Welch’s appearance signifies who she is actively styling and creating herself to be. In other words, for male indie musicians, the significance of appearance is devalued; for Welch, it is an integral aspect of her self-creation. As such, representations of Welch can be understood to be part of a system of representation that works not only to represent ‘indie’ musicians, but one that works to constitute ‘style’ as an act of self-creation. The following section considers this discursive construction of ‘style’.

2. Representing ‘style’

In the literature review of this thesis (Chapter One), it was discussed that the concept of ‘style’ was developed within academic theorizations of youth culture as a tool through which to analyze youth cultural dress practices. Subcultural theorists conceived of style as a tool of ideological resistance that subcultural groups developed under the radar of dominant culture (Hall and Jefferson 1993[1976]; Hebdige 1979), and post-subcultural researchers explored the ways in which style could serve as a marker of individual identity and creative consumption (Bennett 1999; Muggleton 2000; Polhemus 1994a, 1994b, 1996, 1998; Willis 1990). However, following Evans’s (1997: 175) argument regarding a Foucauldian analysis of ‘subculture’, it must be acknowledged that ‘style’ is produced through multiple discourses: not only academic, but journalistic and advertising, as well (see also Woodward (2009) on discourses on ‘street style’). In this section of the chapter, the way the concept of ‘style’ is constituted within popular fashion media discourse is analyzed. Popular fashion representations of ‘style’ share much in common with the academic definitions of ‘style’. Within popular fashion discourse, ‘style’ is defined as emerging from ‘below’ – from the streets – and it is identified as signifying ‘individual identity’ and ‘creativity’. However, today, discourses on ‘style’ proliferate and its ‘underground’ status seems to give way to a democratization of ‘style’. At the same time, other contemporary representations of ‘style’ work to recode ‘individual identity’ and ‘creativity’ as markers of a new, seemingly unattainable, fashionable ideal for women.

2.1. *i-D* and the ‘straight-up’

The concept of ‘style’ is tightly linked to *i-D* and, specifically, the ‘straight-up’ fashion image that was the magazine’s ‘visual signature’ in the 1980s (Rocamora and O’Neill 2008: 186). The origins of *i-D* as one of three youth cultural publications (alongside *The Face* and *Blitz*) consciously establishing themselves in opposition to high fashion magazines in 1980 is well documented within existing literature from fashion studies. Rocamora (2009: 61) suggests that style magazines emerged as a distinct genre ‘perhaps to reassure

readers by keeping at bay the negative connotation attached to the femininity that the word “fashion” still evokes’. Indeed, the style magazines were aimed at young people and made by young people, whatever their gender. Jobling (1999: 35) writes that these magazines attempted ‘to tap both the imagination and the wherewithal of young adults who had grown up in the shadow of punk’. They allowed a space for young people to create their own images, which, as Lynge-Jorlén (2009: 62) argues, led to a ‘ubiquitous sense of self-promotion [as the style magazines] showed the styles of friends of the producers or the producers themselves, as well as how they partied’. Thus, the images presented in the magazines’ pages were understood as representing a ‘reality’ of youth culture in opposition to the glossy, staged fashion editorials seen within high fashion magazines. Cotton (2000: 6) argues that these style magazines were seen to herald a shift towards ‘fashion photography as a commentator on contemporary lifestyles’.

The ‘straight-up’ fashion image was one of the means through which ‘contemporary lifestyles’ were documented. The ‘straight-up’ was a photograph taken of a person, randomly stopped on the street and wearing his/her own clothes. Smedley (2000: 147) describes the ‘straight-up’ ‘as portraiture and as social documentation’ as the goal of the ‘straight-up’ is not to photograph fashionable display, but rather to document ‘real’ styles and ‘real’ identities. Williams (1998: 112) identifies the ensembles featured in the ‘straight-up’ photographs as mix’n’match assemblages of clothes, ‘ranging from expensive to high street to secondhand’. Rocamora and O’Neill (2008) suggest that these ensembles were understood as being ‘combined in apparent disregard of dominant fashion codes’ (186), and, as a result, the ‘ordinary individuals’ featured in the photographs were understood to be ‘creators in their own right’ (190). Thus, Smedley (2000: 147) concludes, the ‘straight-up’ portraits ‘still worked to create an ideal of the “fashionable” self. This style, which *i-D* and its competitor, *The Face*, made into the visual currency of the early 1980s, reinforced the credo that fashion was “lifestyle”’. Evans (2004: 143) argues that the ‘straight-up’ images not only showed how people lived, but who they were, as she describes street-style as a ‘catwalk identity parade’, in which identities are promenaded on the street as fashion designs are on the catwalk.

Thus, within these ‘straight-up’ fashion images, the concept of ‘style’ was constituted as the way people could demonstrate their identities by creating their own unique ensembles. However, referencing Thornton’s (1995) work, McRobbie (1998: 154) argues that the only people represented in *i-D* were those with ‘subcultural capital’. Thus, it can be argued that the ‘identities’ shown in *i-D*’s ‘straight-up’ images were only those of the young and hip, and ‘style’ was constituted specifically as the visual manifestation of young people’s ‘subcultural capital’. In this way, the notion of ‘style’, as it was constituted

within the 'straight-up' images, resembles the concept of 'style' as it has been developed by researchers working within youth cultural studies. Not only is it a tool through which young people can express their difference by developing their own looks and demonstrating their identities, but, within both academic and journalistic discourses, 'style' is constituted as 'alternative', as a 'rejection' of what are understood to be the norms of 'mainstream' fashion.

2.2. *The field of popular fashion*

Bourdieu's (1993a, 1993b) discussion of the dialectics of field struggles serves as a framework through which to understand the significance of the emergence of these youth style publications and *i-D*'s championing of the notion of 'style'. Using Bourdieu's (1993a: 58) phrasing, *i-D* and the other youth style publications acted as 'newcomers' to the field of fashion,

[...] assert[ing] their difference to get it known and recognized, get themselves known and recognized ('make a name for themselves'), by endeavouring to impose new modes of thought and expression, out of key with the prevailing modes of thought...

In contrast to a conception of fashion as being something that emerges from the elite ateliers of designers, filtered through high fashion magazines and then eventually down to readers, these style magazines, and specifically *i-D*, promoted a conception of fashion as being something that emerges 'from the streets'. However, Lynge-Jorlén (2009: 145) notes, 'Bourdieu's dialectics of the old and the new, the establishment and the newcomers, right and left, seem dated when seen in a contemporary context'. She continues, 'Contemporary fashion seems less about either/or opposition than about mixing styles, histories and references – regardless of their seemingly high or low status' (2009: 146). Her analysis highlights changes that have occurred in the field of fashion since the emergence of the youth style publications in the early 1980s.

Jobling (1999), König (2006) and Lynge-Jorlén (2009) bring attention to a blurring of magazine genres, and thus a troubling of the field of fashion, in the 1990s. Jobling identifies the editorship of Alexandra Shulman marking a shift in *British Vogue*. Under her leadership it began to employ several of the photographers who had made their names at the style publications and also 'to incorporate the type of street or grunge style iconography more usually associated with magazines like *The Face* and *i-D*' (1999: 8; see also Lynge-Jorlén 2009). Jobling points out that this incorporation of 'grunge style' photography was not without opposition, as *British Vogue* readers responded negatively to the 1993 spread 'Under Exposure', photographed by Corinne Day and featuring Kate

Moss. He identifies the response to the editorial as one of the ways in which ‘the ensuing tension in incorporating what is acceptable in subcultural practice or alternative culture into the mainstream or dominant culture’ manifests (Jobling 1999: 113). König (2006) similarly notes this shift in *Vogue*’s representational forms. She suggests that ‘no title resonates with authority and history the way that *Vogue* does’ (2006: 205); however, in analysing the magazine’s language over the period between 1980 and 2001, she observes ‘a shift from “high culture” to “popular culture” as the frame of reference’ (2006: 215). She explains, ‘*Vogue* has tried to move on from its traditional and somewhat elitist roots and yet one cannot help wondering if this has, at times, been at the expense of an assured and recognizable identity’ (2006: 220). On the other side, referencing Penny Martin, Lynge-Jorlén notes that the emergence of the second-wave of the style press in the 1990s – *SleazeNation*, *Dazed & Confused* and *Raygun* – heralded a shift in the style publications in that the genre ‘became altogether glossier’ (2009: 64). Throughout the 1990s the demarcation between style publications and high fashion magazines blurred, as the two genres were influenced by each other. In addition to the ways that Jobling (1999), König (2006) and Lynge-Jorlén (2009) have identified as key markers of a blurring of the boundaries between contemporary fashion media genres, it can be argued that another way in which this genre blurring has manifested is through the proliferation of discourses on ‘style’ throughout the field of popular fashion in the UK.

2.3. ‘Street style’ and ‘festival fashion’

The expanding regime of contemporary ‘street style’ representations serves as an effective access point into an analysis of the proliferation of discourses on ‘style’. As Rocamora and O’Neill (2008: 185) state, there has been an ‘institutionalization of vox pop fashion images’ across the popular fashion media. Within these images, moreover, ‘the street’ is constituted as a space for the display of ‘style’. As such, it stands in direct opposition to the catwalk – the physical manifestation of the established fashion system (2008: 189). They continue, these images have such a strong presence within contemporary popular fashion imagery that ‘the word “street” has come to speak for itself’ (2008: 197). That is, the word alone draws to mind the practices of ‘style’ – the acts in which a person engages by his/her own choice in order to create and display his/her individual identity. Such representations of ‘style’ are rife with ambivalences, however. Rocamora and O’Neill (2008: 197) note that some contemporary ‘street style’ representations are, in fact, photographed in studios. This ambivalence can be problematized further in relation to a specific sub-set of ‘street style’ representations: ‘festival fashion’.

Many contemporary festival fashion representations follow the same model as

'street style' representations. That is, those people who are featured in 'festival fashion' segments of magazines and newspapers are represented as constructing their own ensembles and rejecting the codes of fashion, and the 'festival' is constituted as an 'alternative' space that fosters their activities. For example, a segment called 'People Watcher' in an issue of *The London Paper* featured photographs of five young women attending the Lovebox festival in London (*The London Paper* 20 July 2009: 20-21). The women appear to have been stopped at the festival and drawn into a photography area, where they were photographed and interviewed. As is typical of many 'street style' segments, next to the photographs of the women were lists of the items worn, their sources and their cost. The specific setting is worth considering in greater detail. Although the feature identified the location as the Lovebox festival, the photographs appeared to be taken in a makeshift studio, complete with wood flooring and a white backdrop. 'Warehouse Style Studio' was written on the backdrop, bringing attention to the fact that the high street chain Warehouse sponsored the feature. This is significant when coupled with the fact that three of the five women featured are wearing garments from Warehouse. This segment is, in fact, promotional material for Warehouse. The store uses the codes of 'street style' and 'festival fashion' in order to advertise itself.



Figure 3: 'Spy: Trends: Hotpants vs. minidresses.' *Vogue*. September 2009.

Another example of the ambivalence coded into 'festival fashion' representations is a small article from *Vogue* that features a page on what young celebrities (models, musicians and 'it' girls) wore to Glastonbury (*Vogue* September 2009: 140) (*Figure 3*; previous page). The women are each wearing their own unique assortment of garments, incorporating denim shorts, trilbies, tartan shirts, babydoll dresses, Wayfarers and wellies, amongst other garments, into varying combinations. The women's ensembles are interesting to consider in light of Reynolds's (1989) reading of the indie look. Again, Reynolds identifies the indie look of the 1980s as a child-like look, explaining that indie girls wear 'hardly any make-up and no high heels' as a rejection of the overtly sexualized fashion trends of the 1980s (Reynolds 1989: 251). Few of the women featured in *Vogue* wear visible make-up and none are wearing high heels. With the exception of two women, all are wearing wellies – large waterproof boots, associated with country walks and gardening, far from the realm of fashionable display. When reading the boots in this way, the contemporary indie look for women resembles that of the 1980s; it eschews an overtly sexualized aesthetic, characteristic of many fashionable trends for women. On the other hand, due to Kate Moss's infamous 'wellies-and-hotpants' and 'wellies-and-minidresses' looks from Glastonbury 2005, the mud boot has become a celebrated fashion garment. In coupling the boots with hotpants and minidresses, moreover, Moss created a sexualized look, showcasing, what Hadley Freeman has called, 'those delicately angled knees' (*The Guardian* 24 June 2005: np).

Further, the bodily carriage of the women featured reveals that they are familiar with practices of fashionable display: that is, the 'techniques of the body' (Mauss 1973) used to participate within contemporary fashion. The women pose, facing the camera, often resting their weight on one leg with the other leg turned to the side. This stance has a slimming effect and demonstrates that the women are savvy participants within the contemporary fashion environment. This latter point is emphasized further by the facts that *Vogue* has identified the women by name in the feature and that the garments they wear are on trend. Their images are organized by category, and the distinction presented to readers is, 'Trends: hotpants versus minidresses' – a categorization that highlights Moss's influence on the creation of specific 'festival fashion' looks. Woodward argues that, although the 'myth of street style' identifies it as 'innovative', the people featured in contemporary representations of 'street style' are, in fact, wearing 'whatever the current trend is' (2009: 88) – an analysis that applies to 'festival fashion', as well.

This notion of 'trends' points attention to the fact that the festival season now occupies a specific place within the fashion calendar. The empirical data collected for this research included numerous articles from the contemporary popular media whose

function was to prepare readers for the festival season through suggestions concerning which garments to buy and how to mix them together. For example, an article from *London Lite* by Rebecca Boyce was identified through the tagline, 'Join the festival fashion parade: gear up for the Glasto catwalk'. Boyce writes that 'with the UK's largest festival, Glastonbury, kicking off on Thursday, if you haven't already considered your all-important wardrobe you'd better stock up on those style essentials sharpish' (*London Lite* 22 June 2009: 20). The way in which magazine readers are advised to prepare for festivals resembles to an extent the way in which they are advised to prepare for the summer. Whereas the latter entails working out to get a beach-ready body, the former entails purchasing a range of festival-appropriate garments. The article continues by providing a list of suggestions for appropriate festival gear that one can pick up on the high street, including wellies, hotpants and a variety of embroidered tops. Thus, it is difficult to conceive of the ensembles displayed in 'festival fashion' segments as having been constructed in opposition to current trends and the established fashion system. Woodward (2009) concludes, therefore, that there is a disjunction between the way in which 'street style' is produced through its own mythologies, on the one hand, and the way in which it appears in the contemporary media, on the other. She argues, 'The mediated version of street style, present in fashion magazines [such as *Grazia* and *Elle*], has mutated: the subversive has become the ordinary' (Woodward 2009: 88-89).

Perhaps a different conclusion can be made of this material, however. Perhaps the issue is not that there is a disjuncture between the 'myth of street style' and contemporary 'street style' representations, but rather that 'style' is constituted within these representations across the contemporary fashion media as something that a wider range of people, who may or may not be in possession of 'subcultural capital', may demonstrate. The fact that 'festival fashion' is promoted across a range of contemporary popular fashion media genres as part of the yearly fashion calendar suggests that a subject position is being opened up through which a wide range of people can, in some way or another, align themselves with a dress practice that is itself aligned with the seemingly 'alternative' space of the festivals. Thus, one way to understand the proliferation of discourses on 'style' is to consider the way in which contemporary popular fashion media representations work to promote a more democratized definition of 'style'. As a '[mode] of thought and expression' (Bourdieu 1993a: 58), 'style' is not merely a concept that is consecrated by the 'style' publications and demonstrated by those people in possession of 'subcultural capital'. Instead, according to contemporary discourse, institutions and people, located at a wide range of positions within the contemporary field of popular fashion, can access and practice 'style'. However, as shall be addressed later, there is also the oppositional

tendency within contemporary popular fashion representation systems towards a construction of 'style' as an exclusive fashionable ideal.

2.4. Accessing 'style': the case of Topshop

Topshop provides an interesting case study through which to analyze the way in which the notion of 'style' can be drawn on by agents within the contemporary field of fashion who have, up until this point, been identified as part of the 'mainstream' against which 'style' was defined. High street stores are linked to the 'mainstream' or 'established' fashion system within popular as well as academic discourses. They are understood as being linked to a fashion system that is, itself, understood as being trend-dictated and led from powers on high (like top designers and magazine editors). From this position, Woodward (2009: 90) argues that Topshop, as well as other high street stores, have 'monopolized the "alternative shopping locations" [i.e. vintage shopping] by offering it in the mainstream'. A similar argument is made by Gregson and Crewe (2003: 33), as they note that the geographical divisions between the 'alternative' and the 'mainstream' are 'inherently unstable...continually vulnerable to the processes of property (re)valorization and gentrification'. Although these arguments are valid, they also characterize high street stores as predatory. In contrast, it could be argued that the contemporary field of fashion facilitates such behaviour. In a field of fashion in which discourses on 'style' are prevalent, the oppositional binary 'alternative'-'mainstream' breaks down and stores like Topshop are able to draw on the notion of 'style' in a way that should not necessarily be interpreted as predatory.

An 'Autumn/Winter Style Guide' that Topshop produced and distributed throughout the West End in the summer of 2009 serves as an example of the way in which it has attempted to align itself with the notion of 'style' and the related notion of the 'alternative'. The Style Guide serves as a guide to popular fashion trends and, simultaneously, as promotional material for Topshop, as it details the various ways in which Topshop is active within the contemporary fashion culture of London (ie. by collaborating with Kate Moss, by collaborating with young designers like Emma Cook and Christopher Kane, by showing a line at London Fashion Week, etc.) and also advertises garments from the new collections. As promotional material, the Style Guide is a useful piece of evidence through which to explore the way in which Topshop draws on the notion of 'style' in order to build its 'identity'.

Topshop builds its 'identity' through an association with London. This 'identity' is clearly visible in the interior retail design of the New York store, for example, as walls are covered in London city signs labeled 'Oxford Street' or 'Regent Street'. Moreover, within

this piece of promotional material, it does not simply align itself with London as a city, but it aligns itself with the myth of London as *the* city that most fervently nurtures individual creativity and 'style'. An article about British fashion entitled 'Dress as though your life depends on it' begins with the question 'what makes British style the coolest in the world (if we do say so ourselves)?' Scott Schuman (also known as The Sartorialist) is asked, 'Is there one girl who defines London style?'. Later, Celia Birtwell – known for her design collaboration with then-partner Ossie Clark in London in the 1960s – is asked 'what gives London its style?' Her response is that

People look to London, she says, because we take risks: 'I think we're less sheepish. From vintage through high street there's individuality, there isn't a particular look. We try things out in a more radical way than anyone else. And other people follow, don't they?'

The style guide takes up the ideas discussed by Birtwell, continuing, 'That's the thing about British style, we like to break the rules, to mix and match. And it's fun – serious fun sometimes' (Topshop Autumn/Winter Style Guide 2009: 39). Thus, an idea of London as creative and rebellious fashion capital is mobilized through references to 'breaking the rules' and 'being individual'.

Such a characterization of London is routinely produced within popular discourse. Rocamora (2001a, 2001b) explores the way in which fashion is produced as *popular* culture within the discourse of *The Guardian*. Similarly, David Gilbert (2000: 13) explains,

London is portrayed as a different kind of fashion capital – not the source of authoritative edicts on 'the look', or the headquarters of globalizing corporations, but a place where high fashion reinvigorates and renews itself, as it bumps up against the rawness of the real city. In fashion's continuous search for marketable expressions of the 'spontaneous' or 'authentic', this trope of the city as a diverse and unpredictable 'hotbed of creativity' can be very powerful.

In drawing on this pervasive and powerful myth of London, Topshop creates its 'identity'. Moreover, within the promotional material, it places itself as sitting at the apex of this 'alternative' fashion city. That is, the article concludes by returning to the question that Schuman was asked at the beginning of the article, proposing, 'As for the London girl, maybe she's the Topshop girl?' (Topshop Autumn/Winter Style Guide 2009: 39).

Significantly, this ideal human representation of the city is a young woman, as the article asks specifically who 'the London girl' is. This discussion of 'the London girl' reflects the projected readership of the Style Guide: young women. Moreover, this discussion of 'the London girl' draws on the figure of the 'dolly bird' – the young woman who was seen to represent the Swinging Sixties (Breward 2004; Radner 2001). Thus,

Topshop not only associates itself with a characterization of contemporary London as a 'hotbed of creativity', but it associates itself with the memory of the Swinging Sixties – a period of time that continues to be celebrated within popular discourse as the city's heyday. In so doing, Topshop deepens its identification with an idea of London as creative and youthfully rebellious: with an idea of London as an 'alternative' fashion city.

Moreover, the notion of 'style' is embedded into the way in which Topshop builds its 'identity'. At other points of the 'Style Guide', the notion of 'style' is directly addressed. For example, there is a 'Student Style' page, featuring young, female university students, photographed according to the 'straight-up' formula (Topshop Autumn/Winter Style Guide 2009: 1 in insert). The Style Guide similarly features an 'Insider City Guide', in which young women from London, Leeds, Birmingham, Edinburgh and New York tell the reader about their favourite places in their respective cities to shop and to hang out (Topshop Autumn/Winter Style Guide 2009: 4-5 in insert). They present to the reader their insider knowledge – their 'subcultural capital'. For example, the woman from New York is described as presenting 'her cooler than cool recommendations for doing New York in Style'. Her knowledge is represented as niche 'insider' knowledge. The Style Guide also features a 'Style Talks' page, in which four young women – a singer (Florence Welch), a model, a DJ and a stylist – discuss their ideas on fashion and style with the reader (Topshop Autumn/Winter Style Guide 2009: 36-37). These four women are all either cultural producers or 'cultural intermediaries' (Bourdieu 1984), and thus Topshop is aligning itself not only with the 'ordinary' person from the street (in the 'Student Style' article) and those people with 'subcultural capital' (in the 'Insider City Guide' article), but also with those people working in, and influential within, the contemporary fashion and music industries. This point is evidenced further within the Style Guide, as there is an interview with the well-known stylist Katie Grand, who styles Topshop's runway shows, and there is an article about Kate Moss, with whom the store works closely to develop the Kate Moss collection.

The 'Insider City Guide' and 'Style Talks' segments are interesting when placed in dialogue with one another because such a dialogue draws attention to the fact that the line between those people with 'subcultural capital' and those people working as cultural producers and 'cultural intermediaries' within the contemporary fashion and music industries is thinly drawn, if at all present. The tagline to the 'Insider City Guide' reads,

New in town? We trawled deep and high in search of the most fierce, ferocious and fashionable Topshoppers to take us on a personal tour of their local town, stylish student lifestyle and soon-to-be not-so-secret local hotspots! (Topshop Autumn/Winter Style Guide 2009: 4 in insert).

The tagline to the 'Style Talks' segment reads, 'Step inside the wardrobes of fashion's most stylish'. Both groups of women are represented as being 'in-the-know', yet the former for their 'insider' knowledge and the latter for their ability to style themselves expertly as well as their prominence within the contemporary cultural industries. This distinction between the two groups of women seems weak, however; both groups are representative of 'the London girl' – the main subject of Topshop's discourse. Topshop's promotional material points to a blurring of the boundaries between 'subcultural capital' and the capital specific to the field of fashion in the UK.

2.5. *i-D and the contemporary field of popular fashion: a dominant position*

This blurring of forms of capital can also be analysed in relation to *i-D*'s discourse. In two recent landmark issues – the 300th issue (June/July 2009) and the '30th Birthday Issue' (pre-fall 2010) – the publication attempted to reaffirm its connection to the notion of 'style' and, in so doing, affirm its dominant position within a field of fashion in which discourses on 'style' proliferate.

For example, the 30th Birthday Issue of *i-D* features an article called 'So many girls, so little time'. In it, *i-D* contributor Susan Corrigan reminds readers that '*i-D* has always celebrated identity. It's where our name came from'. She continues by explicitly setting out a definition of 'style':

When fashion does not feel like a series of dictations from on high but is experienced as a series of choices you make about yourself, to communicate what's going on inside you, it becomes something else: style (*i-D* pre-fall 2010: 187).

Through its attention to and 'critical affirmation' of 'style', *i-D* not only designates 'style' as 'a worthy object of legitimate discourse', but it 'declare[s its] claim to the right to talk about it and judge it' (Bourdieu 1993a: 35). Similarly, when *i-D* defined 'style' in the 1980s through its 'straight-up' fashion images, it simultaneously claimed for itself 'the monopoly of the power to say with authority' what 'style' is and who demonstrates 'style' (Bourdieu 1993a: 42). The difference between *i-D*'s consecration of 'style' through the 'straight-up' images of the 1980s and its consecration of 'style' through articles like Corrigan's today is that, within contemporary popular fashion culture, *i-D* is not the only publication to utilize a discourse on 'style'. Thus, *i-D*'s attempt to define 'style' directly and to re-establish its own link to the concept is an act through which *i-D* not only establishes its right to talk about and define 'style', but it establishes its dominant position within the contemporary field of fashion.

Further, in the 300th issue *i-D* featured short vox-pop interviews with, and photographs of, three hundred 'current contributors, photographers, writers, stylists and everybody who is the life blood of the magazine' (*i-D* June/July 2009: 10). With this use of vox-pop interviewing and candid photography, the issue's pages resembled those of the publication in the 1980s. That is, the pages could be understood to be an 'identity parade' (Evans 2004: 143) in which 'contemporary lifestyles' (Cotton 2000: 6) were celebrated. Moreover, this celebration of the people close to the magazine follows on from the 'ubiquitous sense of self-promotion' characteristic of the magazine in its early stages as a youth cultural publication (Lynge-Jorlén 2009: 62). However, many of the people featured in the 300th issue are also featured in articles and editorials within other contemporary publications as well as in other forms of fashion media, such as television shows, which are not aligned with subculture and 'alternative' culture in the same way that *i-D* is. For example, this issue features an article about Florence Welch, who also appeared in articles in *The Sunday Times Style Magazine* (31 May 2009), *Elle* (October 2009) and in numerous articles and highlights from the daily papers (*London Lite* and *The London Paper*). Alexa Chung is featured, as well. Well-known for her clothing style (a point that is discussed in greater detail in the following section of this chapter), she is a TV presenter who recently co-hosted, alongside Gok Wan, the television show *Gok's Fashion Fix* – a programme dedicated to showing middle-class, middle-aged female viewers how to create high fashion looks using high street garments. Another person featured is Vivienne Westwood, the designer who is credited with creating the punk look in the 1970s and who now, arguably, sits atop the British fashion industry with her own high fashion label.

McRobbie's (1998) classification of those people featuring in the pages of *i-D* magazine as only those with 'subcultural capital' does not appropriately categorize those people featured in the 300th Issue. That is, these people do not possess a form of capital that is only valued by members of subcultural or 'alternative' groups, but rather they possess a form of capital that they utilize in the process of positioning themselves within the field of popular fashion in the UK. Drawing on this analysis of *i-D*, Chapter Seven explores in greater detail those agents and institutions who draw on their associations with 'alternative' cultures and 'subcultural capital' in order to position themselves within the contemporary field of fashion: the second-hand store Beyond Retro and the figure of stylist. This chapter concludes by considering those people who are positioned dominantly within this field of fashion because of their skills at styling themselves. It can be argued that representations of such young women – including Welch, Alexa Chung and Pixie Geldof – produce a new, perhaps unattainable, fashionable ideal based around this notion of 'style'.

2.6. *Inaccessible 'style'*

Although 'style' is largely constituted within contemporary representations as being more democratic than it once was, there are other representations that constitute style through codes of exclusivity. In their analysis of 'street style' images, for example, Rocamora and O'Neill (2008) argue that, although identifying the people represented as 'creators in their own right' (2008: 190), 'street style' features simultaneously work to re-affirm the position of journalists and fashion editors within the field of fashion. They explain,

[...] through the documentation of street styles not only do journalists offer selective definitions of the fashionable city subject, but they simultaneously construct and define their own roles. Although concessions are made to the creative style and the authorship of the people, readers are reminded that true expertise remains the attribute of fashion journalists (2008: 194).

Quoting from Bourdieu, they continue later, 'What is fashionable is what journalists say is fashionable. [...] The ultimate fashion expertise lies in the power to attribute fashion expertise, in "the power to consecrate producers or products"' (Rocamora and O'Neill 2008: 195). Thus, 'style' remains in the possession of those people who are already established within the field of fashion, as opposed to the 'ordinary' people represented in the images. Moreover, frequently representations of 'style' do not actually feature 'ordinary' people, but rather young celebrities or other people known for their work in the music and fashion industries – a point that was discussed in the preceding sub-sections in relation to the 300th issue of *i-D* (June/July 2009) and the 'Style Talks' feature from Topshop's Autumn/Winter Style Guide. Within these representations of 'style', the young celebrities, cultural producers and 'cultural intermediaries' featured are often represented as having, in a sense, 'superhuman' abilities for practicing style.

A feature from *The Sunday Times Style Magazine* serves as example of this form of representation (*Figure 4*; following page). The tagline to the feature, which was focused on 'festival fashion', proclaimed that it was 'Time to Shine', followed by the suggestion, 'Take your fashion cue from the poster girls of summer' (*The Sunday Times Style Magazine* 24 May 2009: 26). The feature consisted of four sections, each based around a different poster girl: TV presenter Alexa Chung, musician Natasha Khan (of the band Bat for Lashes), aspiring journalist Peaches Geldof and TV presenter Cat Deeley. Photographs of the four women, taken at various summer music festivals, represented the women as if in 'street style' images, wearing ensembles put together seemingly of their own choosing. The magazine's fashion editors made suggestions for readers regarding how they could attempt to recreate the women's looks through pieces found on the high street. For example, a leather jacket from British Home Stores (BHS) and denim shorts from Topshop

were suggested to re-create Chung's 'boho biker' look. The message put forward through this feature is that these women have their own 'style', and the reader can attempt to follow it, as well.



Figure 4: 'Time to Shine.' *Sunday Times Style Magazine*. 24 May 2009.

Chung is represented throughout many fashion features and segments as someone who is skilled at styling herself. For example, in an interview with Chung about her MTV talk show with the American youth fashion and lifestyle magazine *Nylon*, Chung said about herself, 'I don't think MTV has had a VJ or a presenter who wants to style themselves before' (*Nylon* September 2009: 119). The author, Stephanie Trong, adds, 'Chung is quickly becoming a style icon, with a page on MTV's website that showcases what she wears each day, a lot of which is culled from her own wardrobe' (*Nylon* September 2009: 119). As a TV presenter, Chung's professional identity is tightly linked to her personal and visual identity. Moreover, both are represented as being the result of active choices she makes about the way in which she appears. For example, Chung was featured in *Vogue*'s 'Today I'm Wearing' segment from February 2010. Each month a young woman is asked to document in pictures and written descriptions what she wears everyday. Others featured are often models (such as Alessandra Ambrosio and Rosie Huntington-Whiteley),

fashion royalty (Julia Restoin-Roitfeld and Margherita Missoni), London 'it' girls associated with the indie scene (Daisy Lowe and Charlotte Dellal) as well as several indie musicians (Alison Mosshart of The Kills and Marina Diamandis of Marina and the Diamonds) (see vogue.co.uk). Over the course of her month, Chung reveals a combination of vintage garments, items she's made (such as necklaces), high street garments (mostly from Topshop) and designer pieces. She wears Margaret Howell shoes, Chanel boots, a Miu Miu coat and an Opening Ceremony dress, for example. Further, she carries a limited edition Sofia Coppola for Louis Vuitton bag one day and the Mulberry 'Alexa' bag another day, drawing attention to the fact that she has had a high fashion bag named after her. The 'What I'm Wearing' segment relies upon a construction of Chung (and others) as extremely skilled in the art of styling herself. However, the images reveal that she is also someone who is fully immersed in the field of fashion. She uses garments that are inaccessible to most people in order to construct her look.

Pixie Geldof is another young woman celebrated throughout the fashion media during the period of empirical research because of, what are understood to be, her skills at styling herself. Geldof is featured, for example, in a fashion editorial for *Vogue* (September 2009) that was focused around the theme of leather (*Figure 5*; following page). In the editorial, Geldof played the role of model, despite the fact that she does not fit the standard physical proportions of a professional model. As *Vogue* journalist Harriet Quick suggests in a related article from the same issue called 'Are you a tomboy or vamp?', Geldof is the ideal model for the editorial because she, 'with her short peroxide hair, kick-about poses and flagrant disregard for what is "pretty", wears her leather well' (*Vogue* September 2009: 249-250). Across these two features, Geldof is represented as having an almost effortless ability to wear her leather, resulting from her own individual style/lifestyle.

Geldof is photographed wearing garments chosen for her by the stylist working on the editorial. That she is wearing thousands of pounds worth of designer garments is significant because it is through these garments that Geldof is introduced to the magazine's readers. In other words, an image of Geldof is constructed through high fashion garments – garments that are inaccessible to most readers of the magazine. Moreover, several of Geldof's own garments, such as a leather jacket (shown in the image on the left) and jewellery, are included in the featured ensembles with the credit 'model's own' in the byline. Phil Becker – the former art director at *The Face* – has reminisced, 'There was no reason [...] for a magazine like *The Face* to please advertisers. [...] We didn't have to credit anybody we could run credits like "model's own"' (quoted in Cotton 2000: 93). Within the *Vogue* editorial featuring Geldof, however, the inclusion of 'model's own' garments takes on a different meaning. It is through this act that the magazine's editors

consecrate Geldof and her garments. Geldof is represented as someone who can artfully choose garments and construct an ensemble, and the included garments are represented as fashionable, as worth including in the pages of this elite fashion magazine. In contrast, potential readers are given advice regarding how to recreate Geldof's look; for example, 'try Hi Star or Rellik [two expensive London-based secondhand stores] for authentic Eighties jackets' (*Vogue* September 2009: 239).



Figure 5: 'Leather Rebel'. *Vogue*. September 2009. Photography Alaisdair McLellan. Styling Kate Phelan.

These young women are represented as embodying a contemporary ideal of femininity. This ideal is linked to the 'art of self-styling', but is also, perhaps, inaccessible to those engaging with the representations, as the garments used to construct images of these women are high fashion garments, too expensive for most people to buy and use in their own processes of self-creation. Thus, although many contemporary representations of 'style' work to constitute it as a practice in which a wide range of people can engage, these other representations of 'style' work to constitute it through codes of exclusivity, identifying it as the practice of an elite few.

Conclusion

In analysing contemporary representations of indie, this chapter has drawn attention to a range of often competing discourses. The first section of this chapter considered contemporary representations of indie musicians. It was argued that representations of male indie musicians work to produce a version of 'authenticity' that is constituted through a 'rejection' of fashion. Although this discourse reproduces generic associations between rock music and masculinity, it can be problematized in relation to the fact that these representations of 'authenticity' have very literally been *fashioned* by stylists using contemporary fashionable garments. The second section of the chapter considered the way in which 'style' is constituted within popular fashion media discourse, creating a space for the construction of feminine subjectivity. Here, a link was drawn between *i-D*'s 'straight-up' images of the 1980s and contemporary discourses on 'style'. However, as the concept 'style' has become valued throughout the contemporary field of fashion in the UK, the binaries 'alternative'-'mainstream' and 'style'-'fashion' have been troubled, not least because 'style' has become a form of contemporary fashionable femininity. It was shown further that the proliferation of representations of 'style' points to two contrasting tendencies: a seeming 'democratization' of 'style' in which it no longer remains the possession of only those people with 'subcultural capital', on the one hand, and a re-coding of 'subcultural capital' into capital to be mobilized within the field of fashion.

What I want to suggest is that contemporary indie is produced across these differing representations. Contemporary indie crosses different subject positions and identities and is interwoven into a wider cultural formation – one that is marked by shifts and changes in, firstly, the relationships between the field of popular fashion and the sub-field of indie music and, secondly, the internal organization of the field of popular fashion. The remaining two chapters take up themes that were introduced in this chapter. Chapter Six considers to what extent the interview respondents take up the gendered subjectivities created within the regime of contemporary indie representations, and Chapter Seven considers the internal organization of the field of popular fashion in the UK through an analysis of the way in which some agents use a form of alternative fashion capital to gain status within the field.

Chapter Six

Contemporary indie and the creation of the self

This chapter analyses the ethnographic data collected from observation of and interviews with 27 female and 19 male respondents in an attempt to problematize the way in which the self is created within contemporary indie. The analysis presented here is based around two themes: gender and forms of ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu 1984, 1993a). As discussed in the preceding chapter, contemporary indie representations produce two related, yet divergent, discourses: indie ‘authenticity’ and ‘stylish’ femininity. This chapter shows that, although the respondents do inhabit the gender-specific subject positions constituted within these discourses, the process of internalizing the ‘truths’ of these historically specific discourses is, to use Hall’s (1980) term, ‘negotiated’. This is a point Nixon (1996) notes concerning the applicability of ‘practices of the self’ to an analysis of the way in men inhabit ‘new man’ subjectivities. He suggests,

[...] we would need to know more about the way certain practices of looking and the care of the self were regulated by other masculine scripts. We would also need to know how they might have been disrupted by other forms of knowledge and practice that shaped particular lived masculinities (1996: 19).

The issue of ‘forms of knowledge’ that Nixon highlights is of particular significance within this thesis. As is shown in this chapter, the extent to which the respondents inhabit the gender-specific subject positions created within contemporary representations of indie depends upon the forms of ‘cultural capital’ that they mobilize within their ‘practices of the self’.

1. Indie ‘authenticity’

The preceding two chapters have drawn attention to the ambivalences inherent to the relationship between indie music and popular fashion. Chapter Four explored the way in which, in the mid-2000s, the indie look for men was a popular fashion look, available to be purchased in high street stores. At the same time, however, *NME* began to criticize the fact that indie had become fashionable, indicating that something had been ‘lost’. Chapter Five examined contemporary representations of indie musicians. Although these articles and images are literally fashioned by professional stylists, using contemporary popular fashion

garments, the representations simultaneously work to produce a notion of 'authenticity' defined as a 'rejection' of fashion. These ambivalences can be charted in the discourses of the male respondents, as well. Whereas some of the male respondents take up the discourse of indie 'authenticity', others contradict this discourse by demonstrating their 'fashion capital' (Entwistle and Rocamora 2006; Rocamora 2002). Still others fall somewhere in between these oppositional poles.

1.1. Internalizing 'authenticity'

One good place to start is with Dave's interview. At the time of interview, Dave was the lead singer of a London-based band that had been receiving attention from some small-circulation magazines, like *Artrock*, and weekly music magazines, like *NME*. His interview can be analysed in dialogue with the representations of indie musicians, examined in the preceding chapter. In his discourses on the self, he demonstrates that he has internalized the values conveyed within these representations. For example, it was argued that contemporary representations of indie musicians work to forge a link between musicians' appearances and their musical personalities. Borrowing McLaughlin's (2000: 269) wording, these representations work to present male indie musicians as they 'just are' as opposed to '[wearing] masks'. Dave drew on this discourse when recounting an experience in which he and his band-mates had once been styled for a feature within a Spanish magazine. He said,

Dave: We did a photo shoot for a Spanish magazine, and they wanted to dress us. Like they wanted to style us for the shoot, but I really didn't want to do it. So, we compromised and I swapped my...I was wearing just a plaid, checked shirt...and I swapped my own shirt for one of theirs, which was like a Levi's one. And then just put my own jacket over the top of it anyway, so you couldn't see it. But that was...that was the best compromise we could come to.

Rachel Lifter (RL): What did the clothes look like?

Dave: They were just too clean and like...they were nice clothes, I guess, but just not something that I'd wear, so I don't really want to lie to people. I guess, I like...it's a picture of me in a magazine, and I don't want it to be a picture of someone else's idea of me. I don't want to stand there and say, 'Dave is wearing a shirt from Diesel. Go and buy this shirt.' I don't care if Diesel sells any shirts, you know? Yeah, the other two guys dressed up. They put some of the clothes on. But they looked good, and they were comfortable doing it. It's not like I have a massive problem with it, but personally I wouldn't really want to do that.

Sennett's (2002 [1977]) concept of the 'authentic' self can be used to frame Dave's discussion. That is, he understands his appearance as a tool through which to introduce himself and to reveal his personality; he says he does not 'want to lie to people', but rather wants to present a 'picture of me' to the magazine's readers. One way to interpret the coherence between Dave's discourse and that of the media representations analysed in the preceding chapter is to consider those images as presenting a Foucauldian model for

practice that Dave follows in order to produce himself as an indie musician.

Dave's discussion of the Spanish photo shoot is significant, moreover, in that he draws attention to the issue of fashion brands – also discussed in the preceding chapter. At various points in the interview, he is critical of the relationships developed between bands and fashion brands. Above, he interprets the styling work involved in the creation of the magazine image as a marketing tool for Diesel and *not* as a useful tool through which the band's public identity could be formed. Later in the interview, he discussed his band's decision to forego sponsorship from a brand.

Dave: I just remembered, we got offered, yeah, some jeans company wanted us to uh...as a band...the four of us to kind of wear their jeans for some sort of poster or something. And they were like, they were saying...our management were like, 'you know, we could get this money and record, if not an album, definitely at least a single or an EP with the money, just like pump it back into the band'. But we turned it down.

RL: What was it? Why did you turn it down?

Dave: Um, (long pause) just on one level, I could just never take myself seriously after doing that. And two, it's not, it wasn't like a brand I particularly want to be...not that I particularly want to be associated with a brand, but it's like, you know, I wouldn't want to be like so intrinsically linked with a brand like that, so we turned it down.

In that he quite forcefully rejects linking up with a fashion brand, Dave's words convey a notion of indie 'authenticity'. He draws on this discourse of 'authenticity' at another point in the interview. Explaining the contemporary state of music, he suggests,

I think times have changed. Like, you know, in the past with bands and stuff, everyone wanted to have kind of this air of authenticity and integrity and stuff, but the way things are now, I think it's been a lot...it's relaxed a lot. I mean, people will do things that twenty years ago, bands would never dream of doing, like getting in bed with so many brands. But I guess, maybe that's what you need to do these days. But I don't know. It's sad, and I'm not necessarily going to do it, but it's weird.

As Chapter Five showed, indie bands were unacknowledged by the style and fashion press of the 1980s, and thus it can be argued that it was less likely that these bands decided against 'getting in bed' with fashion brands, as Dave contends, and more likely that they did not have the opportunity to do so. In contrast, in the 1990s, Edward Enninfu of *i-D* noted that male indie musicians were indeed walking in the shows of brands like Dolce and Gabbana, Versace and Calvin Klein (*i-D* August 1995: 6). Accordingly, it can be argued that Dave presents a misremembered past.

Although Dave's characterization of what indie used to be is skewed, his discussion points attention to the dilemmas facing contemporary indie musicians: namely, whether to accept sponsorship from a brand. As discussed in the preceding chapter in relation to Alan's interview, contemporary male indie musicians have a variety of opportunities to

engage at various levels with the fashion industry. Male indie musicians frequently walk in runway shows and feature in advertising campaigns. For example, throughout 2008 and 2009, George Craig of the indie band One Night Only was featured regularly in Burberry's print campaigns. Similarly, a variety of high profile and niche fashion labels sponsor bands. For example, as Alan from Beyond Retro reported, at the time of interview, the denim label April 77 sponsored The Horrors, providing the band members with garments to wear within performance. The issue of branding is not restricted to the UK context, moreover. During the period of empirical research, US indie band OK Go featured the American high street giant Banana Republic's ad campaign. As Miller (2011) notes, there are advantages of such associations. Drawing on Will Straw, she argues that, as 'a cultural commodity rather than a necessity for life'; that is, 'music is a fundamentally precarious product' (2011: 25). Accordingly, 'creating a contemporary circuit of shared meaning and, indeed, taste-making [with participants within the fashion industry] arguably establishes a greater sense of certainty and a greater chance of success for this product' (2011: 25). Although many bands choose to enter into agreements with brands, Dave's discussion reveals the value system he mobilizes when faced with such dilemmas. In refusing to accept sponsorship from a brand, he draws on the notion of 'authenticity' as a 'rejection' of fashion. He uses the terms 'authentic' and 'integrity' to describe bands from the past, which, as he reports, resisted 'getting in bed' with fashion brands. Thus, not only does Dave internalize the values conveyed in contemporary representations of indie musicians by articulating a link between his appearance and who he 'really' is, but also by 'rejecting' fashion.

Dave's discussion of his band's decision to forego sponsorship is significant for another reason: taste. He never revealed the name of the specific brand within the interview, but his discussion moves between a rejection of sponsorship on a wider level and a rejection of sponsorship from *that* label in particular. Again, he said, '*it wasn't like a brand I particularly want to be...not that I particularly want to be associated with a brand, but it's like, you know, I wouldn't want to be like so intrinsically linked with a brand like that*' (emphasis added). This small turn of phrase points to a mobilization of a specific set of tastes.

1.2. Second-hand stores, 'subcultural capital', 'individuality' and 'alternative' cities

In addition to being in a band, Dave was also an employee at Beyond Retro – a large, London-based second-hand chain store that is analysed in greater detail in the following chapter. Within his interview, he revealed that, since he began working at Beyond Retro, he has sourced most of his clothing from there. The issue of 'taste' is extremely useful

when analysing second-hand shopping practices. In her seminal essay 'Second-hand dresses and the role of the ragmarket', McRobbie (1989b) argues that 'The apparent democracy of the [second-hand] market, from which nobody is excluded on the grounds of cost, is tempered by the very precise tastes and desires of the second-hand searchers' (1989b: 29). Thornton's (1995) concept of 'subcultural capital', developed in the years following McRobbie's article on second-hand ragmarkets, is a useful concept when thinking through the 'precise tastes and desires of the second-hand searchers'. Thornton developed the concept, based upon Bourdieu's (1984) concept 'cultural capital', to refer to the skills and knowledges amassed through participation in a specific club culture. The markers of subcultural capital are not widely shared within a given culture, but rather are unique to a specific group and space. In relation to McRobbie's second-hand shoppers, the markers of subcultural capital are an ability to pick and choose which items should be used a second time around – a basis of knowledge and skills that, although highly regarded within the spaces of the ragmarkets, was not widely celebrated throughout the fashion industry when McRobbie was writing in the late 1980s. In the second section of this chapter, the fact that the skills of shopping second-hand are more widely celebrated within contemporary popular fashion culture is analysed. For example, Palmer (2004) highlights how second-hand garments are routinely used within the fashion media 'as a sign of individuality and connoisseurship' (2004: 197). Palmer's words are significant because they destabilize an association of second-hand shopping with 'subculture'.

Here, however, it is useful to problematize further the notion of 'capital'. Following Bourdieu's logic, Thornton (1995: 12) explains, 'Both cultural and subcultural capital put a premium on the "second nature" of their knowledges'. Accordingly, it can be argued that the specific 'tastes' that members of second-hand communities mobilize are experienced as 'second nature'. This notion of 'second nature' provides a useful framework when analysing Dave's discussion of the nature of contemporary second-hand shopping practices. He mused, 'I guess the curse of working in a vintage clothing store is that you've got so much access to stuff. You're spoilt for choice, and you're a bit of a like schizophrenic in the way you dress'. He continued,

You know, kind of, when I was younger, like, I was really superficial and judged everybody by what they wore. And I don't know if it's like, I don't know if it's the times have got more relaxed or I've just got more relaxed as I've got a bit older – and hopefully a bit wiser – but I don't know how I think. Now, you can pretty much wear whatever you want, really. [...] People just flirt with different things and take what they want. Like an infinite amount of subcultures and genres and put them all together. [...] I think it's just, because there's so much choice now, and everything's so open, people just create their own looks rather than keeping to a regimented set of rules.

The notion that ‘you can pretty much wear whatever you want really’ upon which Dave relies is a romanticized discourse. To use Rocamora and O’Neill’s (2008: 193) term, it is ‘a fashionable ideal without dissonances’, glossing over the realities and structural constraints influencing a person’s clothing choices. Further, in that Dave relies on the notions of ‘choice’ and ‘freedom’, his words resemble Polhemus’s (1994a, 1994b, 1996, 1998) account of the postmodern creation of youth cultural styles. As was outlined in Chapter One, Polhemus theorizes a ‘supermarket of style’. He writes, ‘we have all these different options spread out for us and it is just like choosing tins of soup. You can’t really make up your mind so you think, I’ll have a couple of those and a couple of these’ (1994a: 31). Within this ‘supermarket of style’, moreover, ‘Everyone, it seems, is an “individual”’ (Polhemus 1998: 131). Polhemus’s (1994a, 1994b, 1996, 1998) work is significant because it articulates the connections between ‘choice’ and ‘individuality’ that serve as a foundation for Dave’s comments. This connection is central to an analysis of second-hand shopping practices, as second-hand stores are routinely associated with the notion of ‘choice’. Again, Dave says above that ‘the curse of working in a vintage clothing store is that you’ve got so much access to stuff. You’re spoilt for choice’. Yet as the values of second-hand worlds are ‘second nature’ to Dave, he does not (does not have to) spell out the fact that his ‘choice’ signifies a desire to mark his individuality through dress.



Figure 6: Tom. 2009. Photograph Rachel Lifter.

This point is evidenced further in relation to Tom’s interview (*Figure 6*). Tom was a student in Brighton at the time of empirical research. He was interviewed with his two

friends – Arnold and Harry – at a pub during the day. The three friends had tickets to the Great Escape Festival and were just hanging out, waiting for the evening's events to start. The conversation moved to the fact that Tom's friend Arnold was in an independent band: in Arnold's words, 'we're in no way a subsidiary of any major...we're completely our own island. We're essentially like Motown'. I used this point as an introduction into asking the three friends if they identified as indie kids.

Tom: I don't know...I wouldn't like to, but I think I am...I'm quite...I conform quite a lot to social – I try anyway – to social trends...I think...I don't know...

RL: It's a term you try to avoid, you say?

Tom: No I do do it, but I just don't like the thought that I'm actually doing it. I do go to shops. If you weren't indie, you wouldn't go to shops like Topman and stuff because that's commercial. If you shopped in Brighton, it would be a lot easier to find *actual* independent stores, like indie style, do you know what I mean? But not as commercial...I don't know...I don't really know what I'm saying...

RL: Ok, let's develop that. You're saying that if you shop in Brighton...?

Tom: Yeah, there's got a lot of independent shops in Brighton as opposed to other towns in England that have a lot of commercial high streets and Topmans. Brighton's got a lot more independent fashion shops and vintage shops, so you can create a lot more individual look in a town like this than in a town like Reading, can't you? So that creates the sort of style that Harry has...so I think a lot of the people here are *actually indie*, whereas people in other towns are just following the trend of trying to look like this, but shopping in commercial outlets (emphases added).

The difference between Tom and Dave's discourse is immediately apparent. For Tom, individual choice is not 'second nature'. Instead, in identifying himself as conforming and thus identifying a difference between his own dress practices and those of people who are creating 'a lot more individual look', he spells out the links between second-hand shopping and individuality in a way that Dave does not. He is aware that he does not have second-hand subcultural capital to mobilize within his dress practices, and his conception of the self is not as an 'individual', but rather as conforming to the 'commercial' side of indie. Although his discourse does not support the notion of a 'rejection' of fashion in that he identifies clothing as a key marker of 'individuality', in his words on Topshop, he does reproduce the binary between the 'commercial' and what is seen to be more 'individual' or 'authentic'.

That Tom identifies Brighton as significant to one's ability to create 'a lot more individual look' is an important point. Since the 1960s, Brighton has been associated with youth and 'alternative' cultures (see Cohen 2002 [1972] on the Mods and the Rockers, for example). Like Tom, two other Brighton-based respondents – Will and Joe – characterized the city as an 'indie' city (*Figure 7*; following page).

Will: I think it's a little different depending on where you live. I would say Brighton's a very indie town.

Joe: Yeah, so I guess around here it's a bit looser. Back where I'm from, if you wear anything other than these jock clothes, you're immediately labeled as 'indie'. Or if you drink in this one pub, then you're immediately labeled as 'indie'. But in Brighton...

Will: To be called 'indie' back where I used to live would be like quite a big thing, i.e. there's not a lot of people that live there and like the less amount of people there are, the more affected it is. But like, I don't think that many people actually care that much down here.

Joe: Yeah, it's a lot more relaxed in Brighton because there's such a...I guess it is/does revolve around the music scene because there is so much music going on and so many people in bands that it's generally a lot more relaxed, yeah.



Figure 7: Will (left) and Joe. 2009. Photograph Rachel Lifter.

In contrast to Tom, however, Will and Joe have internalized this discourse of Brighton, allowing it to frame the ways in which they speak about the self. Right before discussing Brighton, they were discussing their own self-definitions.

RL: Would you say your look is 'indie'-ish?

Will: I don't know. I would hate to describe myself as anything.

Joe: Yeah, I wouldn't really want to describe it.

RL: As anything or as 'indie'?

Will: As anything really. I don't know.

Joe: No one likes to be labeled, do they? Last thing you do is label yourself, as well. You'd rather define other people, and thereby define yourself. But I guess, yeah, I would imagine from some people's point of view, from an outsider's point of view, we would be called 'indie'. Yeah.

Will: I personally opt out.

Joe: 'Alternative' is a better phrase because it doesn't get thrown about so much, and it's not such a tight label. It's a little bit more...

The theme of the 'second nature' of 'subcultural capital', discussed in relation to Dave's discourse, can be used to make sense of Will and Joe's self-definition after moving to

Brighton. It can be argued that, unlike Tom, these young men have acquired the 'subcultural capital' associated with Brighton. Accordingly, like Dave, they do not define themselves specifically, but rather rely upon a vague notion that they are 'opting out', doing their own thing.

Brighton is not the only city identified as 'alternative' within the respondents' discourses. Specific areas of London – namely, Dalston and East London more generally – are produced within the respondents' discourses as 'alternative' spaces. East London's history is largely told through its associations with the working-class white community as well as in relation to a variety of immigrant histories: Jewish, Huguenot, South Asian. The spaces of East London have an industrial feel and are to an extent run-down, yet the area is largely being gentrified – a point that is discussed in a moment. Here, it is important to note that, visually, East London is understood to stand in contrast to what is seen to be the bourgeois space of West London. As such, East London is popularly associated with the 'alternative', and accordingly, it is a location where many young creative labourers establish businesses. Dave lived in Dalston at the time of the interview, and it can be argued that the location also served as a source from which he acquired his 'subcultural capital' – a point that is returned to in a moment in a discussion of London Fields.

Sean and Steve were two other respondents who spoke about the 'alternative' nature of East London. They were interviewed at Field Day festival in Victoria Park (*Figure 8*; following page). They had come in to the festival from Walthamstow, where they lived at the time of empirical research. In describing his look, Sean made reference to Walthamstow, saying,

Sean: Because where we live is quite a chavvy area. Chavvy in like a lot of rude boys and people who think they're gangsters and who look at you and think you're an idiot. Other people might think it looks good, but other people will think it's shocking. My mum's not too happy about my style.

As Steve explained further, their look aligned itself more closely with what they understood to be the look characteristic of the Brick Lane area.

Steve: In Brick Lane, you would say that mainly people dress like me or Sean, but in Camden, you get just people from all different like...Brick Lane is more designed on one thing because it's all vintage stuff and all like retro and all our sort of music and all record shops.

Steve and Sean's discussion is significant for two reasons. Firstly, theirs was one of the few interviews in which the issue of class was broached, in that they draw attention to the differences between the 'chavvy' look of their working-class community and the 'retro'

look of East London. Their comment reveals that the look under investigation is constructed not only on the basis of certain knowledges – ‘subcultural capital’ – but that this ‘subcultural capital’ is linked to a specific class position: the middle-class – a point that is returned to in a moment.



Figure 8: Sean (left) and Steve. 2009. Photograph Rachel Lifter.

Secondly, in contrasting the Brick Lane/East London area with Camden, Steve draws attention to the ‘look’ associated with East London: in Steve’s words ‘it’s all vintage stuff and all like retro and all our sort of music and all record shops’. Several of the other male respondents identified an East London ‘look’. For example, Dave also described the East London ‘look’:

Like Doctor Martens...acid-wash jeans that people wear. I’d never wear, but people seem to like them...a lot of sleeveless denim numbers, you know? Big t-shirts, girls who look like Alice Dellal...you know?

Whereas Sean and Steve use the look as a marker of identification, disassociating themselves from the working-class community in which they live, Dave works to distinguish himself from the look, presenting himself as someone who is making his own choices about appearance, again through the great access to ‘choice’ Beyond Retro provides.

Another respondent – James – refused this idea of a ‘look’. At one point in the

interview, he reported that his friend

[...] was saying the other day that there are people that aren't in Shoreditch that say there's a Shoreditch uniform, where you just gotta wear whatever you want to wear kind of thing and just be crazy. But I don't think that it's like that at all. I think everyone that's here is just being themselves, you know what I mean?

Originally from South Africa, James demonstrated an excitement about London and particularly East London. In this quotation, the discourse of London upon which he draws is one that produces the city as a space that nurtures individual creativity – a discourse that was analysed in the preceding chapter in relation to the discourse of London upon which Topshop draws in order to construct its store 'identity'. These differences of opinion draw attention to the ambiguities and ambivalences that emerge in relation to how these young men understand the self as produced within the social space of London. For Dave, the social space of East London supports his ability to demonstrate his individuality without making explicit claims to it; for Sean and Steve the East London 'look' is one that can be contrasted with the 'chavvy' look of Walthamstow; and for James, the social space of East London provides a context in which he can make explicit claims to individual style.

1.3. Fashioning *indie masculinity*

The interview of Eric, moreover, shows how these ambivalences emerge within one person's discourse on the self (*Figure 9*; following page). Eric was a photographer, and thus when asked to describe his look, he related his discussion to photography. He said,

I think it's your general taste, isn't it really? You know, aesthetically, the photography I like, the music that I like, it's all got a kind of like simple, kinda folky feel to it, I guess, not kind of high-end glam stuff. It's really kind of real...I don't know. Yeah, I think it all combines into one, isn't it? Your taste.

McLaughlin's (2000) discussion of rock ideology is useful when framing Eric's words. McLaughlin (2000: 269) writes 'For rock culture, it is "others" who wear masks, others who dress up, "we' just are"'. The same sort of distinction emerges within Eric's words in relation to the 'folky' aesthetic he appreciates and the 'high-end glam' aesthetic. He draws on a discourse that rejects 'artifice' whilst championing what is 'real'. As such, his discourse resembles Dave's discussion of his experience at the Spanish photoshoot. The two young men similarly create a connection between their appearance and who they 'really' are.

That Eric uses the term ‘taste’ draws attention to the question of ‘cultural capital’. Bourdieu (1984) uses the concepts of habitus and capital to challenge this notion of ‘taste’ – to demonstrate how one’s tastes are structurally organized. Following Bourdieu’s work entails questioning to what extent we can think about Eric’s ‘tastes’ as markers of his capital. At other points in his interview, Eric and his girlfriend Abby discussed how his look has developed over the years. Originally from Wales, Eric revealed that his look changed drastically when he moved to London. Jokingly, he said that Abby ‘skinny-jean-ified’ him when they first began dating. Abby admitted, ‘I bought him a few key items for his first birthday when we were together’, before claiming, ‘and then I just think you came into your own’. That Eric has become ‘skinny-jean-ified’ points toward the fact that he has taken on the popular aesthetic for young men in the UK. In so doing, he has acquired knowledge about contemporary fashion: in other words, ‘fashion capital’ (Entwistle and Rocamora 2006; Rocamora 2002). That Abby played a significant role in this process, moreover, draws attention to a heteronormativity underlying this transformation. Finkelstein’s (1991) reservations concerning the possibility of demonstrating the ‘authentic’ self within a culture marked by the ease with which one can transform the body can be used when analysing this disparity between Eric’s discussion of his simple taste and his later acknowledgement that he took on the skinny jeans look when coming to London. That is, even though Eric shapes his look according to contemporary fashions, he continues to draw on a discourse that presents his look as simple and unaffected.



Figure 9: Eric and Abby. 2009. Photograph Rachel Lifter.

Like James, Abby and Eric were interviewed at Broadway Market, off of London Fields – as discussed in the methodology chapter, a popular place for people dressed in indie-look ensembles to congregate. In a discussion of my research project, Abby and Eric noted that this area was *the* place to go for fashion research because, in Abby's words, 'everyone's a real individual here', thereby reproducing the discourse of East London as a city that nurtures 'individual' innovation. Although this discourse on East London persists, it is important to note that Broadway Market, along with other East London locations, has over the past years become gentrified, as evidenced by the fact that the stores and restaurants lining the street itself are quite expensive. This process of gentrification undermines a characterization of East London as 'alternative', as 'subcultural', pointing instead towards the fact that being 'alternative' is increasingly fashionable in London amongst the bourgeois set. This point, moreover, serves as a complement to the earlier point concerning the middle-class nature of 'subcultural capital' within contemporary indie. That is, the notions of the 'alternative' and the 'subcultural' are drawn on within the construction of a middle-class formation – a great difference from the work of the CCCS scholars (Hall and Jefferson 1993 [1976]).

Like Eric, Harry brought attention to a blurring between what is 'alternative' and what is 'fashionable', the 'subcultural' and the 'mainstream'. Significantly, unlike Eric, Harry did not draw on a discourse that rejects the 'glam' side of fashion, but rather he actively demonstrated his interest in – and knowledges of – contemporary fashion (*Figure 10*; following page). Harry was interviewed with his friend Tom, whose interview was discussed above. Again, Tom identified Harry's look as an 'individual' look, as opposed to his own commercial 'indie' look. Harry took up this idea in his own discourse, saying,

[...] clothing is important ideologically because it's an expression of how well you can handle the world, essentially. [...] There is a kind of implied sub-text to people's clothes that say quite well how they're handling just dealing with life. People who kind of wear clothes well, um, seem to imply that they can deal with their existence with more dexterity.

In so speaking, Harry makes a point that stands as a central contribution of this thesis: that the self is constituted in relation to the knowledges one possesses and capital one mobilizes.

Unlike Dave, Will and Joe, the capital Harry mobilizes is not 'subcultural', but rather 'fashion capital'. For example, at the time of interview, Harry and his two friends were wearing skinny jeans. When asked when he started wearing the style, Harry responded,

Harry: Two-thousand and five, I reckon. That'd be four years [of wearing skinny jeans] as well. What year was the first Hedi Slimane collection?

RL: I think it was 2003, but it could have been 2004 or 5...

Harry: I mean, 2003 would make sense because it's the commonly perceived idea of how something happens is actually the case. That collection comes out in 2003, and it trickles down all the way to some fifteen-year-old in Stoke-on-Trent two years later – you know what I mean? – buying some jeans from Topman.



Figure 10: Harry. 2009. Photograph Rachel Lifter.

In so speaking, Harry revealed that he has the cultural capital – the knowledge – specific to the field of fashion: what Rocamora (2002) and Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) have called ‘fashion capital’. His statement here contrasts with the responses given by other male respondents. Will and Joe, for example, explained that they took up the style because it was what others in their peer group were wearing, and Steve and Sean explained that the look came with the genre of music that they were into. Harry demonstrated this desire to present himself as someone who is knowledgeable about fashion throughout the interview. At another point, he provided a succinct and insightful analysis of the contemporary popular fashion environment. When asked if the way he dresses is linked to music, he replied,

I would only say so far as it's linked to music because music leads the cultural identity, the cultural trend. It's not...it leads the trend or the cultural milieu, but it's not dressing after individuals within music. It just so happens that music and the music industry and the industries that link in with it are the cultural trendsetters. I mean, if chess and badminton were the cultural trendsetters, we'd all dress like chess and badminton.

In identifying music as '[leading] the cultural identity', Harry aptly draws attention to the fact that the value systems leading contemporary fashion are informed by the cultural formation of music. He specifies further that this phenomenon is particular to the UK context.

Indeed, at the centre of investigation within this thesis are the connections Harry makes between music and fashion within contemporary UK culture. In analysing the discourses of some of the male interview respondents, this section has attempted to draw attention to the way in which indie is experienced in relation to music and fashion. Further, it has attempted to show how differences in the respondents' discourses not only rest upon the extent to which they highlight the significance of fashion to their understandings of the self, but also that the way in which they speak is informed by the varying forms of cultural capital that they are able to mobilize. The following section takes up these themes – the relationship between music and fashion, 'alternative' and 'mainstream' cultures, and the issue of capital – in an analysis of the female respondents' 'practices of the self'.

2. 'Stylish' femininities

The interviews of the female respondents can be analysed in dialogue with the 'street style' and 'festival fashion' representations examined in the preceding chapter. That is, the ways in which these respondents speak about their appearances and dress practices reveal that these young women are internalizing the notions and values produced within these representations: 'mixing and matching' and the 'street'. However, their discourses also reveal that the ways in which they respond to these representations and inhabit the subject position of the 'stylish' person is informed by their possession of what I call alternative fashion capital.

2.1. *Mixing + matching, Alternative fashion capital*

In her article 'The Myth of Street Style', Woodward (2009) analyses 'street style' representations from the contemporary popular fashion media in conjunction with interviews with young people found 'on the street'. She suggests that contemporary 'street style' images in publications like *Elle* and *Grazia*

[...] show 'ordinary' people plucked off the street, an ordinariness underlined by their inevitable comment that the outfit was sourced from charity shops or ('vintage'), and a high street shop perceived to be 'cool,' such as Topshop (2009: 88).

She argues further that her respondents have internalized this 'new "myth of

fashionability””, presenting themselves as people who ‘mix and match’ second-hand and high street garments (2009: 92). She reports, her respondents articulate that they like second-hand sources for ‘unique’ garments that others might not have (2009: 97); however, she argues that their attitudes differ greatly from those of subculturalists as they shop in high street stores and thus ‘do not emphasize wanting to completely repudiate the styles of the mainstream’ (2009: 98).

Like Woodward’s (2009) respondents, a variety of respondents to the present research project similarly relied on this notion of ‘mixing and matching’ when discussing their ensembles at the time of interview and their dress practices more generally. For example, Joan – a respondent interviewed with her boyfriend, Jack, outside of the East End Thrift Store in Whitechapel, London – explained,

With high street clothes, you go out and see about ten other people wearing that dress or top, so vintage items tend to be more unique. Um...I’m not really sure...I just like the style of vintage clothing. I prefer that. I like mixing it with high street items to make a bit of a unique look.

Joan’s comments were repeated to a certain extent by a variety of female, and some male, respondents. For example, Sam and Nancy – two respondents from Toronto, who were interviewed at the Great Escape Festival in Brighton – explained,

Nancy: You can find tons of it [vintage clothing in Toronto], so there’s like, thrift-department-stores, and that’s where I do a lot of shopping. Yeah, it’s good to mix that in with basics.

Sam: You can totally like, I think, create like a good look by mixing older shit and mixing it with newer stuff. It’s easy. You don’t have to spend a lot of money, and you can usually find stuff you want to wear.

Like Woodward’s (2009) respondents, these respondents characterize second-hand garments as ‘unique’, yet they also see high street stores as important sources for garments. In drawing on this notion of ‘mixing and matching’, moreover, they signal that it is up to them, as agents within this process, to select an ensemble from the available options. Polhemus’ (1994a, 1994b, 1996, 1998) work on postmodern style resonates to an extent, as these respondents claim to be mixing different looks in their own individual identity projects. However, within the current research project, the options ‘on offer’ are limited to second-hand and high street. For this reason, Woodward’s (2009) claim that this practice is largely an internalization of the ‘new “myth of fashionability”’ (2009: 92) makes sense. The current practice of mixing and matching is not a postmodern stylistic free-for-all, but rather a specific means of engaging in popular fashion culture.

Indeed, pronouncements to ‘mix it up’ appeared throughout the contemporary

popular fashion media at the time of empirical research. For example, an editorial in the 10 August 2009 issue of *Grazia* was entitled 'The Mega-Mix'. The tagline to the five-page editorial read, 'Mix up your knits, jeans and basic tees with glamorous "look at me" accessories to give your dress-down style a new-season update' (*Grazia* 10 August 2009: 56). Similarly, one of the means through which Topshop worked to advertise its garments in the 2009 Autumn/Winter Style Guide was to display the garments through visual 'mix and match' equations, literally showing readers *how* to mix and match their garments. For example, black harem trousers, a crop-top and a denim shirt was one of the combinations featured (Topshop Autumn/Winter Style Guide 2009: 6-7 in insert). Woodward (2009: 92) also notes that 'the mix-and-match aesthetic [...] is perpetuated through fashion magazines as stylists' "style tips" or in the street style pages'. Thus, in accordance with Woodward's (2009) conclusion, it could be argued that, in mixing and matching, the respondents work to produce themselves in a way that coheres with contemporary codes of 'stylish' femininity.

One way to problematize further the connection between contemporary representations of 'mixing and matching' and the practices of living people is to consider the 'competences' employed by the respondents as they engage with this regime of popular fashion representations. Evans and Gamman (1995) and Lewis (2002) consider the way in which lesbian spectators employ a 'subcultural competence' when looking at fashion imagery. Responding to psychoanalytic work on 'the gaze', Evans and Gamman (1995) argue that it is impossible to theorize a singular 'lesbian gaze'. Engaging with Lewis' analysis of Della Grace's photographs, they argue that these images 'address and form the spectator because of the spectator's relationship to knowledge about specific objects and products' and *not* because of the spectator's identity status as lesbian (1995: 36). In other words, reading images has to do more with competences one might have developed as part of a lesbian subculture than it has to do with the essentialist category of 'lesbian'. Lewis (2002) draws on this idea of 'subcultural competences' in her analysis of the ways in which some lesbian spectators can find 'lesbian subcultural referents and cross-gendered lesbian erotics' in the fashion narratives presented in mainstream magazine titles, such as *Vogue Italia* (2002: 657). In relation to the present research, it is possible to think about how some of the respondents employ certain 'competences' when engaging with the regime of popular fashion representations of mixing and matching.

Moreover, it is possible to consider how these viewing competences are then recoded into cultural capital as these young women engage in the dress practice of mixing and matching. Indeed, several of the female respondents, not only made claims to mixing and matching, but also revealed within the interview the knowledges and skills they

employ when engaging in such a dress practice. For example, Abby was interviewed at Broadway Market in Hackney, London with her boyfriend, Eric (who was discussed in the preceding section of the chapter) (*Figure 9*, page 150 of this thesis). She described her ensemble at the time of the interview:

The top is a vintage one that was two pounds from Oxfam in Brighton. The shorts are high-waisted, acid-wash denim, and they're from Topshop. And the jelly shoes are a few years old; they were from Office a few years ago. And the headscarf's vintage, and the glasses I've got from Vegas, and they're fold up ones.

Within this short description, Abby demonstrated that she knew *how* to speak about and describe her clothing through popular fashion terminology. That is, she did not say that she was wearing 'shorts', but 'high-waisted, acid-wash denim' shorts. Moreover, in her description of her shoes, she was quick to note that they were several years old, bringing attention to the fact that she was aware that the trend for jelly shoes happened several years before the period of empirical research (Summer 2009). At other points in the interview, Abby demonstrated knowledge about shopping second-hand. Originally from Leicester, she compared Leicester to London, suggesting that, although there are more options for vintage shopping in London, the prices are better in Leicester. In short, within her interview, not only did Abby reproduce a discourse of 'mixing and matching', but she demonstrated her knowledge of contemporary popular fashion trends found in high street stores as well as her knowledge of shopping in second-hand locations.

Like Abby, Silvia and Kara demonstrated a breadth of knowledge about contemporary trends *and* second-hand shopping (*Figure 11*). The two women were approached for interview outside of Beyond Retro on Cheshire Street. It was a Saturday, and they were hanging out and shopping in the Brick Lane area of London. Although originally from Middlesbrough, the women had been living in London for five years at the time of interview and demonstrated a large amount of knowledge about and interest in the city's second-hand shopping spaces. For example, during the interview, they compared the second-hand stores of the Brick Lane area with the stalls in Camden. Like Abby, they complained about the price of second-hand garments in London, where, it seemed to them, 'a lot of the good stuff goes straight away, and you're left with over-priced rubbish' (Kara). During the course of the interview, moreover, they mentioned old films as inspiration for their dress. In her analysis of second-hand shopping, McRobbie (1989b: 29) identifies old films as key markers of second-hand subcultural capital. She writes, 'The sources which are raided for "new" second-hand ideas are frequently old films, old art photographs, "great" novels, documentary footage and textual material'. She continues

by suggesting that these interests reveal ‘the very precise tastes and desires of the second-hand searchers’ (1989b: 29).



Figure 11: Silvia (left) and Kara. 2009. Photograph Rachel Lifter.

However, Silvia and Kara’s interests and dress inspirations extended beyond anachronistic cultural texts. They were effusive in their praise of Chanel and mentioned Balmain as another fashion house, whose designs they were inspired by. They were similarly excited about Topshop. As Silvia said,

It just moves, Topshop. You go in...I think everything you look at in magazines...it’s not an exact copy, but it’s... Every style is represented in Topshop. Every thing from the catwalk they bring out.

Their equal praise for high-end fashion houses and the high street giant brings attention to a postmodern blurring of the boundaries between high and low culture (Jameson 1991). Moreover, their equal praise for second-hand clothing sources alongside those sources that are actively interwoven into the established fashion system reveals another type of blurring: that between an ‘alternative’ culture and the ‘established’ fashion industry.

This blurring emerged in the broader discussion of what inspires them, as well. On

the one hand, Kara listed a variety of high fashion and niche fashion magazines that she reads:

I love *Purple* magazine, *Interview* magazine – that's probably my favourite. *Vogue*, *Harpers*, *Nylon* – it's a bit young sometimes. *Blackbook*'s really good...just kind of anything I see that I think looks interesting. *10 Magazine* is good, *Wonderland*...but they're all too overpriced...

In so doing, she recognizes the 'authority' of these magazines and their producers. *Vogue* is routinely identified as an 'authority' on fashion (see, for example, König 2006). In fact, it identifies itself as 'the fashion bible'. However, as Lynge-Jorlén (2009) argues, niche fashion magazines 'that merge high fashion with art and style cultures, often targeting both men and women' (68), similarly vie for prominent positioning within the field of fashion media. Kara's identification of these magazines points to an internalization of – an agreement to – the 'authority' of these publications as well as to her elite fashion knowledge. Whereas many people have heard of *Vogue*, it is for the most part only members of the field of fashion that know *10 Magazine* and other niche fashion magazine titles. Yet, at another point in the interview, Kara and Silvia discussed the significance of 'street fashion'. Rocamora and O'Neill (2008) argue that 'the street' is constituted through 'the differential relation that unites this term to the catwalk and its associated realm of high fashion (2008: 189). That is, Silvia and Kara claim to be inspired both by high fashion (brands and magazines) and its relative opposite ('the street').

Rocamora's (2001a) work on the field of fashion in the UK is useful when considering the form of capital demonstrated by these young women in their discussions of their dress practices. She argues that the field of fashion in the UK is one 'that is articulated around [...] the belief in fashion as popular culture' (2001a: 124); however, this is not a homogeneous popular culture. In an analysis of *The Guardian*'s discourse on fashion, she argues that it 'is not a unified language, an ideal voice of the popular or the language of a mass' (2001a: 127). Instead, 'It indexes the notion of hipness', producing popular culture as 'an elite popular culture' (2001a: 128) or a 'high popular culture [in which] traditionally opposed notions are now mixed, a culture at the same time high and low' (2001a: 129). One way to extend Rocamora's work is to consider the ways in which the 'elite popular culture' celebrated within the field of fashion in the UK is one that not only mixes 'high' culture with 'low' culture, but is also one that mixes 'alternative' cultures with 'established' fashion cultures, both high street and high fashion. It could be argued, therefore, that the capital exercised by these young women is a form of capital that takes shape within this field of fashion that is marked by the blurring of 'high' and 'low', 'alternative' and 'mainstream'. That is, not only do these young women internalize the

'myth' of 'mix and match' fashionability, but they demonstrate the skills and knowledges necessary in order to put this practice of 'mixing and matching' into practice successfully, as well.

In this way, moreover, Silvia, Kara and Abby's interview data can be placed in dialogue with contemporary representations of young celebrities, like Pixie Geldof, Alexa Chung and Florence Welch, which were discussed in the preceding chapter. Although Silvia, Kara and Abby may not have the access these young celebrities do to the contemporary fashion industry through gifts from designers and collaborations with labels, etc., they can build a cache of knowledge about this industry and thus integrate it into their own engagement with clothing and appearance. Thus, although 'street style' and 'mixing and matching' are no longer practices employed only by those people with 'subcultural capital', these practices continue to provide a means through which one can display one's capital. That is, within the contemporary popular fashion environment, in which 'street style' and 'festival fashion' representations are ubiquitous, the practice of 'mixing and matching' is not only a means for performing fashionable femininity, but is also the means through which one can demonstrate one's alternative fashion capital.

2.2. Internalizing 'the street'; Looking and being looked at

Thus far, this section has focused on the ways in which some of the interview respondents take up the practice of mixing and matching, as constituted in contemporary 'street style' and 'festival fashion' representations, in order to produce themselves in accordance with contemporary codes of fashionable femininity. It is important to consider, as well, that these contemporary popular fashion media representations convey a notion of 'the street' and the festival as sites of spectacle, as stages for the observation and display of 'unique' ensembles. This section shows that, by internalizing this notion of 'the street' and engaging in the practices of displaying and looking that the notion entails, the respondents engage in 'practices of the self' that are both intersubjective and spatialized.

Several of the female respondents internalized this notion of 'the street', suggesting that they saw it as a space in which they could engage in certain practices of looking at others. In so doing, they claimed to take on a role that resembles that of the *flâneur*, gazing at others within their milieu. Several of these respondents, moreover, articulated that this process of looking at others was integral to their own creative processes of ensemble creation. For example, Rebecca – one of the pilot interviewees from London – stated,

Like I know this girl who wears her hair up all the time with these really cool scarves. And I

was like, 'that looks really cool, but I want to do it my own way'. So I started doing a little beehive, so yeah. So you kind of...I got a leather jacket, and someone else was like, 'Oh, I really like that', so went and got one in a different style, so everyone kind of feeds off each other in a way. Like you wouldn't look at what someone's wearing and say, 'I'm going to go to Topshop and buy exactly what she's wearing'. You think like, 'Oh, she's got an eighties jacket. That's pretty cool. But she's got it in red, and I'm going to try and find one more...that has a higher waist' or something like that because she's a different shape to me, or whatever (*Figure 12*).

Similarly, Nancy discussed her experiences working at American Apparel in Toronto. She stated,

I mean, when you go out, sometimes I see a girl wearing something that I think is really cool, and I'm like, 'Oh, I could try that'. And yeah, I used to work in a retail store, and I guess the other employees...like we had to wear American Apparel all the time, but like people would get creative with it, so it is nice to see what other people are doing (*Figure 13*).



Figures 12 and 13: Rebecca and Adam (left) and Nancy and Sam. 2009. Photographs Rachel Lifter.

That these respondents are interested in the creativity of others provides an interesting point of problematization in relation to an analysis of Foucauldian 'practices of the self'. In her critical analysis of Foucault's work, McNay (1994: 153) argues that

Foucault's conception of the self remains within the fundamental dynamic of the philosophy of the subject which posits an active self acting on an objectified world and interacting with other subjects who are defined as objects or narcissistic extensions of the primary subject.

In other words, 'The idea of ethics of the self remains within this agonistic framework prioritizing the relation with the self over any form of intersubjective relation' (McNay 1994: 152). However, the respondents' claims to take inspiration from others within their milieu challenge this idea of 'practices of the self' as self-focused and narcissistic. Here, attention is paid to the other in a way that acknowledges the other to be another 'stylish' person – another self – in a way that is not merely a 'narcissistic extension of the primary subject'. Indeed, in the above-quoted discussion, Rebecca differentiated between the ensembles she creates and the looks of others. She does not want to recreate the ensemble of the other people exactly; she does not want to *be* that other person. Instead, she respects that other person as another 'self' creating 'unique' looks. Such an act draws attention to the intersubjective nature of the creation of 'unique' ensembles, the intersubjective nature of these 'practices of the self'.

Christina and Jill's interview draws attention to several other aspects of this specific type of 'practices of the self' that involves looking at and taking inspiration from others (*Figure 14*; following page). The two women were interviewed at Field Day Festival in London. Speaking specifically about the festival, they stated,

Jill: We've just sat all day going, 'Oh, that's nice' or 'I don't like what they're wearing'.

RL: Well, [the festival] is a good place to watch.

Jill: It's inspiring to watch what other people are doing, what other people are wearing, where other people go, what kind of music people listen to. I really like things like that.

RL: Anything interesting you've seen today?

Christina: A lot of crop-tops. But like, I really like the crop-top, but I like it with a high-waisted thing, so there's only a bit of skin, and some people are showing too much.

Jill: Checked shirts...a lot of checked shirts, which is good...maybe a little bit overdone now.

Two points of analysis emerge out of this discussion. The first point is that the festival is a physical site in which one can engage in the act of looking at others. That is, the spatial organization of festivals allows for a particular type of gazing.

In an analysis of London Fashion Week, Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) examine the way in which, within the arena of the catwalk theatre, participants engage in a process of 'seeing and being seen'. Drawing on Foucault's discussion of the way in which space facilitates certain modes of looking, they argue that, within the arena of the catwalk theatre, 'The gaze circulates *around* the space [...] so that all players are both subject and object of the gaze in the game of visibility' (2006: 744; emphasis in original). As the runway juts through the centre of the audience, dividing it into two sides, those people seated on each side 'become part of the spectacle as one's eyes are directed across the stage to bodies seated on the other side' (2006: 744). This game of 'seeing and being seen', moreover, works to reproduce the power relations of the field of fashion. As those

people with the most 'fashion capital' sit in the front row and those with little 'fashion capital' are relegated to the standing area, 'differences are visibly mapped out onto the space itself' (2006: 744).



Figure 14: Christina (left) and Jill. 2009. Photograph Rachel Lifter.

Entwistle and Rocamora's (2006) analysis of the spatial organization of the catwalk theatre is useful when considering how the spatial organization of festivals produces certain practices of gazing by and amongst festival participants. Festivals consist of large masses of land, divided up into smaller areas, each focused around a stage for performance. This layout facilitates a relationship between performers and audience, wherein those people in the audience watch the performers who, because of the stage lighting, have difficulty seeing audience members. However, there are also wide areas of space on festival sites, where those festival-goers who are not watching specific performers can hang out, relax and have food. These spaces allow for people to sit and observe others. These spaces, moreover, are arguably egalitarian. The VIP areas of festivals are often cordoned off with opaque fencing, and therefore the hierarchies amongst people at the festival are not visible within the main festival areas. Instead, it can be argued that all those people moving through the main festival site have the ability to

gaze at others within their milieu.

Maffesoli's (1996) concept of the 'neo-tribe' can be called on to analyse the social formation that emerges during festivals. According to Maffesoli, there are no rigid boundaries defining neo-tribes. Instead, 'neo-tribalism is characterized by fluidity, occasional gatherings and dispersal' (1996: 76). Neo-tribes 'are fragile but for that very instant the object of significant emotional investment' (1996: 76). Indeed, what is significant to neo-tribes is not whether they will persist, but rather 'what is important is the energy expended on constituting the group *as such*' (1996: 96; emphasis in original). It could be argued that, in one sense, festival-goers form a neo-tribe, bound, at least in part, by their practices of looking at one another. In so doing, they create a form of sociality, in which the process of creating the self can be performed intersubjectively, through looking at and taking influence from other 'stylish' people. Indeed, such an argument can be translated onto other outdoor spaces, such as London Fields. As was discussed in the preceding section, like a festival, London Fields is a space that serves to stimulate the acts of looking and being looked at, which are integral to the construction of the self within contemporary indie.

Recalling Christina and Jill's discussion, a second point can be drawn from this material. In drawing attention to certain garments that they have seen (i.e. crop tops and checked shirts), the women bring attention to the specificities of the look, in which they are interested. Discussing 'street style' images, Rocamora and O'Neill (2008: 193) write,

In fashion journalism, the street is not an open space. The multiplicity of the people, the diversity of the street and the complexity of the real are brushed aside, reduced to a fashionable ideal without dissonances. [...] the straight-up giving a rather skewed picture of urban life.

It can be argued that the 'street' as a 'fashionable ideal without dissonances' is internalized by Christina and Jill, as well as by other respondents. These respondents speak generally of the 'street' as being a place to look at, and be inspired by, the ensembles of others. However, they do not identify and discuss the multiplicity of people one sees on the street. Observation of the streets and festival sites, in which empirical interviews took place, revealed a multiplicity of styles, however – styles that are neither acknowledged by Christina and Jill nor represented in the popular fashion press. Even at Field Day festival, which could be argued to be the site with the highest proportional number of people wearing indie-look ensembles, there were many people wearing ensembles that differed radically from the crop-tops and checked shirts that Christina and Jill saw. Thus, the 'street' as a space wherein these respondents understand themselves to be looking at and

taking inspiration from others is, in fact, an idealized space. In this sense, these respondents internalize the 'street' as 'a fashionable ideal without dissonances'.

This point of the 'street' as an 'idealized space' poses significant problems when re-considering the space of the festival. Firstly, it opens up the question of the egalitarian nature of the festival site. Although VIP spaces are cordoned off, they are indeed present – a fact that is known by many festival-goers. Further, many contemporary festival fashion representations feature celebrities in these backstage areas, drawing attention to hierarchies within the space. Secondly, that the festival is an 'idealized space' has consequences for an analysis of how the gaze circulates throughout the space of the festival. If it is true that not everyone at a festival meets the stylistic criteria necessary in order to participate within the practices of 'looking and being looked at', then it is also true that the gaze that circulates within the festival is not, in fact, completely egalitarian. Following Lacan, Evans and Gamman (1995: 16) indicate that there is a difference between 'looking' and 'gazing', suggesting that the former is 'associated with the eye' and the latter 'with the phallus'. This distinction is significant when considering the way in which the gaze is used as an instrument of power.



Figure 15: Nicole (left) and Iris. 2009. Photograph Rachel Lifter.

The way in which Nicole and Iris – two women approached for interview at the 1234 Shoreditch festival – discussed their ensembles for the day is of particular relevance to a discussion of power and the gaze (*Figure 15*; preceding page). Neither woman was from London (Nicole was from Manchester and Iris from Bristol), but the two friends met up at the festival to see the musician Patrick Wolf perform. In response to a question about what influences their looks, the women stated,

Nicole: ... just general things like influence you to what you're going to wear, like where you're going or what you're going to see, so you feel like you want to dress for that occasion...

RL: Do you have any specific examples? Can you think of any different occasions that have inspired you to dress differently?

Iris: Well like now. Because we're at a festival, obviously you don't want to look too dressy because you're outside. So you want to wear something casual, but you don't want to be completely boring.

Nicole: Yeah, I mean, everyone here looks really good. Everyone's made a really big effort. I feel a bit underdressed, but at the same time, I wouldn't have brought anything dressier to wear...trying to find a compromise between price and style.

Nicole and Iris define the festival as an event with a set dress code: 'you want to wear something casual, but you don't want to be completely boring'. This 'dress code' was identified in different ways by some of the other female respondents, as well. For example, Tanya and Danielle – two respondents from Bristol who were interviewed at Reading Festival – noted that the looks they were wearing were their 'informal' looks. They would have to put on more 'formal' attire to go to work. As students, Christina and Jill did not face these same issues with dressing for work; however, they acknowledged that their looks do change according to different contexts. As Jill said, 'Well, when not this, maybe I'd wear a pair of nice big heels. Maybe some sequins...I do like sparkly stuff'. At the time of interview, Jill was wearing a Barbour coat over a denim waistcoat, a floral-print t-shirt, leggings and plimsolls (*Figure 14*; page 162 of this thesis).

The ways in which these female respondents identify their looks as shifting can be analysed in relation to Tseëlon's (1995) work on the performances of femininity. As noted in Chapter Two, Tseëlon argues that, in contrast to men, women are not constructed as having an 'inner essence'. She explores the issue of woman's 'non-essence' through an empirical research project, in which she finds that women present multiple 'selves' through their dress. Understood through Goffman's dramaturgy, she argues that this act is an investment – however minor – in a certain version of the self. Following Tseëlon, it can be argued that, in moving between different looks, the above-quoted female respondents perform femininity. Following Goffman (1959), moreover, the festival is one situation that demands a context-specific feminine performance of 'mixing and matching' and looking around/being looked at. For these women, festival femininity is just one of the several

femininities they perform. That these female respondents invest in multiple versions of the self depending on context, can be placed in dialogue with the ways in which several of the male respondents draw on a discourse of the 'authentic' self, as was discussed in the preceding section. It would seem that the data collected within the empirical research project support Tseëlon's (1995) claims that masculinity can be experienced as a coherent self – an 'inner essence' – whereas the feminine self is experienced as multiple and shifting.

Returning to Nicole and Iris's above-quoted discussion, that others are 'making an effort' to meet the festival dress code serves as a point of anxiety for Nicole, as she claimed to feel 'underdressed'. Foucault's (1977) work on the panoptical gaze is useful when analysing Nicole's anxiety. That is, it could be argued that, for Iris and Nicole, the threat of the observer's gaze forces them to police themselves by dressing the part of the 'festival-goer'. However, in the space of the festival, the gaze does not emanate from a central watchtower, but is located in the looks of the other festival-goers. That is, it is a 'female gaze' (Gamman and Marshment 1988) exercised by other young women who are engaging in similar dress practices in response to this cultural moment. Further, what Bartky (1990) calls the gaze of the 'anonymous patriarchal other' seems to affect Rebecca and Silvia's dress practices and senses of self. These two women noted that, because of their curvy body shapes, they never wear skinny jeans, although it is the only style of jeans that they appreciate aesthetically. These two women have been discussed in this section as people who, within interview, demonstrated their alternative fashion capital (Silvia; *Figure 11*; page 157) and presented themselves as engaging in the intersubjective process of taking inspiration from others (Rebecca; *Figure 12*; page 160). That is, these women demonstrated confidence in their skills of putting together their looks. Yet their confidence is compromised by a gaze that works to police women into conditioning their bodies to meet contemporary ideals of beauty. Nixon's (1996: 19) statement that 'we would need to know more about the way certain practices of looking and the care of the self were regulated by other masculine scripts' in order to understand how people inhabit the subject position of the 'new man', quoted in the introduction to this chapter, is relevant here. For these female respondents and others, constructing the self within contemporary indie is simultaneously a process of constructing the self in relation to wider discourses that regulate ideas around beauty and 'acceptable' feminine bodies. That one produces oneself as able to mix and match garments and take inspiration from others when engaging on one's own 'practices of the self' does not negate the fact that one can also performatively reproduce stereotypical gendered norms (Butler 1999 [1990]).

Returning to the gaze that circulates throughout the space of the festival, it

becomes clear that there are varying ways of internalizing the notion of 'the street'. It seems that those people who are confident in their own skills of putting together looks – that is, those people with alternative fashion capital – take on the role of the flâneur and exercise the power to gaze, whereas those people with less confidence see themselves as the object of a threatening gaze from others within their milieu. When put into practice, the idealized space of 'the street', like the fashionable ideal of 'mixing and matching', reveals differences amongst the respondents regarding the alternative fashion capital they access as they work to create themselves.

Conclusion

In analysing the interview respondents' discourses and dress practices, this chapter has provided some of the 'answers' to the 'questions' asked in the preceding chapter. The preceding chapter examined the multiple (and contradictory) subject positions created within contemporary indie representations, and this chapter has explored to what extent the respondents inhabit these subject positions when engaging in their own 'practices of the self'. It demonstrated that there is no script that the interview respondents follow directly. Instead, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the way in which they inhabit the subject positions created within indie representations is negotiated. Although the theme of indie 'authenticity' as well as the sense of a coherent and 'authentic' self (Sennett 2002 [1977]) were significant to some of the male respondents, the discourses of other male respondents pointed to the way in which indie is experienced through music *and* fashion. Their words introduced a blurring between 'alternative' cultures and popular fashion, specifically in relation to the way in which London is understood and experienced. This blurring manifested within the female respondents 'practices of the self', as well. What becomes clear within the analysis of the female respondents is that, like within contemporary representations of 'style', the notion of the 'alternative' serves as a foundation for a system in which people are positioned hierarchically in relation to the amount of alternative fashion capital they are able to mobilize. This theme of alternative fashion capital stands at the centre of analysis in the following – and final – chapter.

Chapter Seven

Alternative fashion capital and the contemporary field of popular fashion in the UK

This chapter considers the contemporary field of popular fashion in the UK and thus contributes to the small body of literature concerned with examining fields of fashion and the struggles for symbolic capital that take place within them (Entwistle and Rocamora 2006; Lynge-Jorlén 2009). Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) explore the ways in which the boundaries around, and the hierarchies within, the field of high fashion in the UK are materialized through the event of London Fashion Week. Within this analysis they introduce the concept of ‘fashion capital’, defining it as ‘the capital specific to the field of fashion’ (2006: 740; see also Rocamora 2002). They continue, ‘Like all field-related capital, it is made up of economic and cultural capital [...] and social and symbolic capital’ (2006: 740). Lynge-Jorlén (2009) draws on this concept of ‘fashion capital’ to make sense of the practices and knowledges of the producers and readers of niche fashion magazines. She argues that producers of niche fashion magazines ‘are driven by an impetus to secure status, distinction and recognition’: in other words, symbolic capital (2009: 118). She continues, consumers of niche fashion magazines demonstrate a form of cultural capital that ‘consists precisely of knowing and understanding the mix of exclusivity and connoisseurship of high fashion and style cultures’ (2009: 145). The present chapter contributes to this body of existing work by exploring how some agents and institutions working within the field of popular fashion in the UK directly and indirectly mobilize the notion of the ‘alternative’ as they position themselves within the field.

Within the contemporary field of popular fashion in the UK, the notion of the ‘alternative’ holds great symbolic value. This point is evidenced within the analyses presented in the preceding chapters of the present thesis. Chapter Four illustrated how indie musicians were consecrated within the field of fashion, first by the style press in the 1990s and later by the high fashion press in the early 2000s. Chapter Five showed how the notion of ‘style’ – a notion that had previously been associated with *i-D*’s ‘straight-up’ portraiture in the 1980s – is now symbolically produced across a range of popular fashion print publications. Chapter Six explained how some young women perform a version of contemporary fashionability that includes mixing second-hand garments with high street ones. What emerges in the analyses presented in these three chapters is that those things

that have been constructed as alternative in the past – indie, ‘style’ and second-hand garments – are now legitimated within the contemporary field of popular fashion in the UK. The argument here is not that these things that were once alternative are now mainstream. Rather, the argument is that the notion of the ‘alternative’ has taken on great symbolic value within the contemporary field of popular fashion in the UK, often leading to both symbolic and economic gains for those field agents and institutions that capitalize on their associations with it. The term alternative fashion capital is thus further developed within this chapter to account for the forms of fashion capital field agents and institutions mobilise that are, in some way or another, linked to this notion of the ‘alternative’.

Two case studies stand at the centre of this investigation: the London-based, second-hand retailer Beyond Retro and the figure of the stylist. The chapter first considers Beyond Retro’s ‘alternative’ ‘identity’ and the consumers it works to attract, before demonstrating how, through the marketing of second-hand garments, the store has established a name for itself within both the sub-field of industry insiders as well as in the wider field of popular fashion. The chapter continues by illustrating how the figure of the stylist, now a consecrated creator of fashion images, first emerged from the style press in the 1980s. It problematizes the nature of the stylist’s creativity by placing it in dialogue with the respondents’ ‘practices of the self’. What is significant about the analysis presented in this chapter, therefore, is that it not only presents an examination of the symbolic value of the notion of the ‘alternative’ within contemporary field of fashion, but it also explores how changes within this field create new possibilities for the construction of the self, thus drawing together into analysis two seemingly incompatible theoretical concepts.

1. Beyond Retro

Beyond Retro is a second-hand retail chain that not only offers several shop locations across London, in Brighton and in Sweden, but also is supported by a global retail structure. As such, the store distinguishes itself from most second-hand retailers and ragmarkets, which are understood to be small, individually run enterprises. Indeed, the example of Beyond Retro demonstrates the way in which second-hand retail can be organized in a way that resembles mass fashion. Its goals of gaining symbolic and economic capital within the field of popular fashion can be aligned with those of popular fashion stores as opposed to other second-hand retailers and ragmarkets. Moreover, the company has added to its retail operation an archives department that serves to consult fashion industry insiders and a press department that serves to advertise Beyond Retro’s

garments within the contemporary popular fashion and music media. At the same time, however, the store continues to create its 'identity' through associations with the 'alternative', by creating a shopping environment that appears to stimulate individual creativity within the shopping process.

1.1. New forms of second-hand retail

The size and scale of Beyond Retro's global retail operation is considerable. As the interviews with Alan and Jen – two Beyond Retro employees – demonstrate, the second-hand retailer is sourcing, sorting and offering second-hand clothing en masse. Alan explained that, although stock was originally sourced from the US and Canada, because 'essentially we're selling one-hundred years of clothes [and] it's going to run out eventually, and the highest grade stuff ran out ten years ago', Beyond Retro has had to turn to other sources for second-hand stock. Now, Alan stated, Beyond Retro sources 'from all over the planet. [...] We sell stuff from India, from Africa, from the Far East. [...] It's become a much more global issue'. Jen explained that, all of Beyond Retro's stock is then sent to Canada, where it is sorted by 'pickers'. She said, 'At the volume that we work, we will still buy, contain a load and sort through them ourselves'. Jen revealed that, once shipped to Beyond Retro's retail locations, a third team works to price the garments.

Such information is presented in a mediated format on the Beyond Retro website, which explains that all garments are sourced 'from charities directly, or indirectly through recycling companies', drawing attention to the fact that 'over 10 million tonnes of clothing and shoes are thrown away by the Western World each year' (www.beyondretro.com, 28 January 2012). Such a statement highlights the global nature of the second-hand market without addressing the issue of where the garments are sourced directly. Through such statements, Beyond Retro works to create its 'identity' in relation to humanitarian and 'green' issues, glossing over the global infrastructure that supports the company. Further, what is not addressed on the website is the issue of sorting. It could be argued that this issue of 'sorting' draws attention to the fact that what appears in store is not a selection of oddities, carefully curated by an individual second-hand retailer, as is the case for some of the retro retailers about which Gregson and Crewe (2003) speak. Instead, what are offered are second-hand garments in bulk – a point Beyond Retro glosses over in its construction of its 'identity'.

Jen revealed further that the processes of sorting and pricing are standardized through the use of trend reports. That is, those people sorting and pricing garments do not have to use their own knowledges of and skills in shopping second-hand in order to choose which garments should be sent to the retail stores, but rather they simply need to

follow the trend reports in order to complete their duties. She explained,

Our trend team is...well, it's a global dialogue. We have our store in Sweden, and they'll tell us what they want for their customers. But here for London, it's all in-house at Beyond Retro. The girl who is doing it now was actually the trend-analyst-assistant and the new-product buyer, and she's just turned over into being the trend-analyst. Another woman basically founded that position and did it for six years.

The activities of the people sourcing garments in various locations around the world and those of the people sorting garments in Canada are thus informed by the trend reports developed in the UK. The significance of this quotation lies in the fact that it highlights the global dialogue central to Beyond Retro's retail operation as well as the organization and standardization of Beyond Retro's stock. Further, the quotation also draws attention to the development of new roles within the second-hand retail sector: here, the trend analyst, but also pickers and pricers. This point is addressed again later.

That Beyond Retro uses 'trend reports' points to another unique characteristic of Beyond Retro's second-hand retail strategy: that it pays attention to and follows 'trends'. Jen described the trend reports as including, 'streetstyle pictures, pictures of famous people, people in bands, people who work here as well as labels or designer pieces – things that are sort of the icon...what we're trying to get many, many more copies of'. She continued,

At the same time that our pickers are picking right now, sort of, eighties Dynasty-era party dresses, while the fashion designers like Asos just came and they put a whole lot of jumpsuits and things with big shoulder pads and things with sparkly appliqués on denim. So the same kind of product that we're looking for here is being produced. So there's definitely fashion *Zeitgeist* in all of it.

The term *Zeitgeist* is significant in that it brings attention to the way in which Beyond Retro's stock coheres with contemporary popular fashion trends. However, in using the term, Jen places a veil over the elaborate mechanism upon which Beyond Retro relies in order to source, sort and price garments. That Beyond Retro has a large array of men's tartan shirts, playsuits and eighties dresses points not to a coincidental collision of popular trends and Beyond Retro's stock, but rather to its strategy to provide a second-hand product that coheres aesthetically with contemporary fashion trends. Beyond Retro was not the only second-hand retailer to employ such a strategy. A visit to a Whitechapel-based retailer revealed a workshop in the back of the store in which second-hand garments were altered in some way or another from their original design to more contemporary ones.

This discussion of Beyond Retro draws attention to a form of second-hand retail that differs considerably from McRobbie's (1989b) ragmarkets. In her seminal essay, 'Second-hand dresses and the role of the ragmarket', McRobbie (1989b) suggests that in the late 1980s London's second-hand sources were more closely aligned with the city's urban markets that sprang up in working-class or immigrant communities than with 'mainstream' clothing stores. She writes, the ragmarkets 'offer an oasis of cheapness, where every market day is a "sale". They point back in time to an economy unaffected by cheque cards, credit cards and even set prices' (30). In contrast, as has been shown, Beyond Retro is a highly organized retailer that operates across multiple sites in different countries *and* attempts to align its stock with contemporary fashion garments.

Further, Beyond Retro has multiple retail stores, all resembling one another in stock content and store design, and the store operates as an online retailer. Its brand is advertised on the website as well as through shopping bags printed with the Beyond Retro logo. Thus, as a case study, Beyond Retro points to changes within the second-hand retail sector since McRobbie's (1989b) seminal article.



Figure 16: Beyond Retro's Cheshire Street store. 2009. Photograph Rachel Lifter.

1.2. Spaces of 'creative' consumption

A visit to Beyond Retro's flagship location in East London reveals a very different 'identity' for the store, however. The Beyond Retro website explains that the original shop was established in a disused dairy (www.beyondretro.com; 28 January 2012) – a history of disuse that is visible in the building's structure (Figure 16). It is an imposing red brick

building with former windows filled in with gray, cement bricks. Graffiti marks the external walls of the building, and trash seems to accumulate alongside its base. The only signifiers that this building is not, in fact, abandoned are the Beyond Retro signs hanging from the front door and side wall and the occasional group of young shoppers standing outside, smoking and chatting. The flagship store is located, moreover, at, what Jen called, the 'frontier of Vintageland'. In so speaking, she distanced the store from the popularly traversed, and arguably gentrified, Brick Lane shopping area. Indeed, in turning off Brick Lane onto Cheshire Street, one must walk for ten minutes before arriving at the shop: first past several other second-hand stores and then past several local pubs, council estates and even some disused buildings. Indeed, on my first visit to Beyond Retro, I became nervous that I had gone too far and had somehow missed the shop, as it seemed that I was far from a recognizable shopping district. It was only the parade of Beyond Retro shopping bags headed in the opposite direction that served as a guide that I was going in the right direction. By establishing its flagship retail store in a disused dairy that sits a good distance from a recognizable shopping district, Beyond Retro works to create an 'identity' for itself as an 'alternative' shopping source, resembling McRobbie's (1989b) ragmarkets more so than a retailer with a large-scale infrastructure.

Further, the retail design of Beyond Retro's shop floor works to mask the organized processes of sourcing, sorting and pricing garments. The store's interior largely resembles a warehouse. The ceilings are high; the external brick walls remain visible through a thin coat of white paint; and much of the piping and electricity circuitry is visible. Upon first entering, one is, in a sense, assaulted by the masses of clothing within the store, as there are thousands of pieces on display on the shop floor in the flagship location. Garments are displayed by type – for example, men's tartan shirts, playsuits, dresses and shoes – and are marked with home-made signs made from printer paper pasted onto colored cardboard. Because no two second-hand garments are exactly the same, however, no rack of clothing is uniformly structured (*Figure 17*). Instead, the rack of men's tartan shirts, for example, includes shirts of varying colours and prints as well as shirts that have been worn to varying degrees. Differently sized shirts are all placed together, as opposed to being organized through ascending size, as is the case in many first-hand retail sites. Similarly, the scarf-section consists of a giant box in which hundreds of scarves rest on top of and entwined with one another. This form of presenting clothing promotes a hunt. One must actively search through the rack of tartan shirts to find one of a preferable colour, size, print and degree of wornness; one must dive into the box of scarves to find one with a pattern one likes.



Figure 17: A rack of clothing in Beyond Retro's Cheshire Street store. 2009. Photograph Rachel Lifter.

It is important to understand the retail design of Beyond Retro, not as the accidental result of having too much stock, but rather as a specific merchandising strategy. Nixon's (1996) work provides a model for the analysis of retail design. He suggests that retail design can be 'understood [...] as working through the organization and incitement of identity' (1996: 52). Following Nixon, it is possible to question how Beyond Retro works to represent identity within its retail design. It can be argued that the organization of garments in store works to produce a 'creative' consumer: one who is able to move through the seeming disarray of garments on the shop floor to find 'unique' pieces. Second-hand stores have been theorized previously as sites for 'creative' consumption. McRobbie (1989b: 24) identifies the second-hand ragmarkets of London as the source of garments used for the construction of resistant subcultural styles. Specifically, she focuses on 'second-hand style' as a particular style of dress worn by young women who wanted to challenge existing codes of femininity, as represented in 'mainstream' dress. Moreover, she argues that these markets provided a space in which shoppers could demonstrate their 'precise tastes and desires', claiming that 'Second-hand style continually emphasizes its distance from second-hand clothing' (1989b: 29). Similarly, Gregson and Crewe (2003: 83) found that people preferred second-hand spaces that allowed them to hunt for garments themselves. Again, Beyond Retro draws on this association between second-hand retail spaces and 'creative' consumption in its merchandising strategy. Not only are people incited to search for garments, they are then encouraged to 'mix and match' these

seemingly distinct garments into an ensemble.

Alan reproduced this discourse of the 'creativity' employed within second-hand shopping within his interview. Alan discussed his interest in second-hand garments:

Alan: Well, for me, the romance of something...obviously these things didn't exist as they exist in your head. But obviously you have an imagining...also the price. The fact that it is nigh on impossible to get two old pieces that are the same. It's unlikely that anything I'm wearing is going to be copied by someone walking down the street...the general look yes, but not the exact items. Whereas as if I buy it from H&M, guaranteed if I walk into town, someone else is going to be wearing it...

RL: Do you put value in that? In that word 'individuality'?

Alan: I don't know. Maybe not anything so coarse as 'I am an individual, I am different.' But there is that sense that clothes are a language and you can be either fluent or a little bit clunky with how you are portraying yourself and how you're communicating with people. So I think, if you shop vintage right, you can show a great deal of finesse. If you do it, maybe with a little bit less experience, then it shows because a lot of um...trying to find the right language...because a lot of people who shop vintage are very, very specific...like the hem of something, the length of something, the colour, the fabric. Even if something looks slightly too new takes its worth out, both in cultural capital – kudos – and in terms of value.

In one sense, Alan's words are relevant to a discussion of 'practices of the self', as shopping second-hand can be interpreted to be one of the acts through which a person works to create him/herself. Further, it could be argued that the space of second-hand stores works to inform this particular 'practice of the self'. Nixon (1997: 324) explains the relationship between retail spaces and 'practices of the self', suggesting,

Shop interiors direct us towards both the establishment of codes of looking and the interweaving of techniques of looking with other practices – handling the garments, trying on clothes, interaction with shop staff – which are integral to the activity of shopping.

Here, the shop interior with its seemingly disorganized assortment of thousands of garments – directs us towards certain practices of choosing garments. The act of choosing second-hand garments is routinely identified as a 'creative' act as well as a means through which to demonstrate one's 'cultural capital'. Mick – a respondent from London – similarly took up this discourse of the 'creativity' of second-hand shopping, saying, 'With mainstream shops, it's sort of dictated by what they decide, whereas vintage...you feel like there's more of a personal selection process going on rather than just being told what to buy by the high street'. As was discussed in the preceding chapter, however, other respondents worked to mark their 'creativity' through the practice of 'mixing and matching' second-hand *and* high street garments. That is, through its retail design Beyond Retro works to produce a space for the 'creative' second-hand consumer; however, for many respondents, this identity is negotiated. Second-hand and first-hand

consumption are combined, understood by the respondents to be in a complementary relationship.

In another sense, Alan's words are relevant to a discussion of positioning within the contemporary field of popular fashion in the UK. In the above quotation, Alan uses the Bourdieuan term 'cultural capital', revealing a certain familiarity with a key concept used within contemporary social analysis. In so doing, he reveals that he is aware of the value of his own skills. This point is significant when considering that Alan has been able to translate his skills and tastes in selecting second-hand garments – that is, his second-hand cultural capital – into professional and economic capital within the contemporary field of popular fashion in the UK: that is, a position at Beyond Retro.

1.3. Beyond Retro and the contemporary field of popular fashion in the UK

It is Beyond Retro as a company, however, that gains the most advantage from Alan's second-hand cultural capital. That is, it can be argued that Beyond Retro draws on the cultural capital of its employees in order to gain economic capital and symbolic capital within the contemporary field of popular fashion in the UK. The company's status in the field is linked not only to Beyond Retro as a contemporary clothing retailer, but also Beyond Retro as a sort of retro consultant to the contemporary fashion industry. As is shown here, Beyond Retro has diversified its operation, selling both garments and 'information'.

Through its work in the textile archive department, Beyond Retro establishes itself as an integral player within the contemporary fashion industry, as a retro consultant to major brands and stores. Jen worked in this department and described her duties there.

The textile archive is mainly print designs, and we've been operating for two years. We go to international trade fairs in Paris and the US and we have international sales reps, and what we do is operate like a textile design studio, but all of our product is vintage. So, we're selling research, essentially, to fashion designers or research and development people or textile designers...sometimes, you know, big companies, sometimes independents. And we use the trend information that is already circulating for the shop, but we also use trend information from forecasting, from the seminars we go to and from the designers themselves, who actually have access to things like WGSN that we don't. What happens is we become kind of the people with the info: we know what people at Topshop are doing, we know what Marks and Spencer's are doing. We don't do a lot of archive for menswear. It is mostly young women, home furnishings, a little bit of stationary...sometimes prints are appropriate for package design. But our biggest clients are like British high street and American high street.

The opposition Bourdieu (1993a) creates between the sub-field of restricted production and the sub-field of large-scale production is useful when analyzing Jen's discussion because it draws attention to divisions within fields of cultural production. Bourdieu uses

this distinction to isolate the sub-field of restricted production from the wider fields in which it is immersed: the field of power and the field of class relations (see Bourdieu 1993a: 37-38). This fact of multiple sub-fields, or rather fields immersed within other fields, can be used to problematize the contemporary field of popular fashion in the UK. In the above-cited quotation, Jen is speaking, not about the wider field of popular fashion, but rather about a sub-field made up of fashion designers, stores, design developers and trend forecasters, amongst other 'insiders' to the contemporary fashion industry.

These industry 'insiders' know what is going on 'behind the scenes' within the fashion industry. That is, they know how certain products are made, who contributes to the design of different products, where from materials can be sourced, wherefrom labour can be sourced, how much it costs to make certain garments and so on. This information is largely unknown by those people who are not working in the fashion industry. Indeed, Jen's discourse revealed a familiarity with terms used within in the fashion industry. For example, saying that the archive department 'operates like a textile design studio' demanded that I, as her listener, knew how a textile design studio operated. However, as an industry outsider, I struggled to keep up with Jen during our conversation, having no idea at the time of interview what a textile design studio was.

When I approached Jen for interview, moreover, it was because I knew she worked at Beyond Retro and could tell me about her experiences with shoppers. Although a personal acquaintance before our interview, I knew neither that she worked in Beyond Retro's textile archive department nor that Beyond Retro operated such an archive. This information is available on Beyond Retro's website; however, it is not prioritized within the website's design. That is, the focus of the website is as a site for e-commerce (www.beyondretro.com). It can be argued, therefore, that the significance of Beyond Retro's textile archive department is not in its role of gaining widespread attention from shoppers, but rather gaining attention from industry insiders and as another source of economic gain. According to Jen, moreover, industry trade shows are one place where the archive department has presented itself to other professionals and companies within the contemporary fashion industry. That she mentions trade shows is important. In their analysis of London Fashion Week, Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) write that 'fashion shows [...] are now important for the consecration of key players and their reproduction in the field of fashion' (2006: 743). A similar argument can be made about trade shows and the sub-field of industry insiders. That is, trade shows work to mark out the key players within this sub-field, and thus, in attending trade shows, Beyond Retro attempts to position itself as a player within this sub-field.

Beyond Retro's role within this sub-field, as Jen states, is to be 'the people with the

info'. She explains further,

We're not selling original designs. We're not providing them with a CD that they can just make it and send it off to the mill. It's companies that have an infrastructure big enough to have someone rework it in-house or re-interpret it.

Because Beyond Retro does not develop original prints, but rather gathers information about vintage prints, their product is more aptly described as 'information' as opposed to 'design'. Information about vintage prints is not widely known or researched. That is, Jen and her colleagues have a specific set of knowledges about retro prints, and they are able to sell this information in order to establish Beyond Retro as an influential name in the fashion industry. It is important to note, moreover, that their relationship with high street stores and designers is symbiotic. Although Beyond Retro has access to historical prints other companies do not, they rely upon other companies for information from the trend-forecaster WGSN (Worth Global Style Network) – information that guides their process of choosing prints. This sub-field, therefore, is one that is formed through interaction and inter-communication, as each player relies upon other players in order to play its role. Beyond Retro plays the role of providing information about vintage prints and designs, and thus Beyond Retro is able to use its second-hand cultural capital to gain both economic capital and symbolic capital – or status – within the sub-field of industry insiders.

Earlier, it was noted that an analysis of Beyond Retro points to the development of new roles within the second-hand retail sector: the trend analyst, pickers and sorters, for example. Jen's role in the archive department also points to a new position within the second-hand retail sector, as does Alan's position in the press department. It is through Alan's work in the press department that Beyond Retro makes a name for itself within the wider field of popular fashion: that is, with the consuming public. Alan's role at Beyond Retro was to work closely with musicians' stylists and magazines' fashion editors to select specific garments from the numerous items on-hand in Beyond Retro's Cheshire Street location to be used in a variety of performances and fashion editorials. Although Alan's work assisting musicians' stylists and magazines' fashion editors points to another emerging position within the second-hand retail sector, this work is largely unacknowledged. In Chapter Five it was shown that, within contemporary representations of male and female indie musicians, credit is given neither to the stylist of an ensemble nor to the source of the garments used in the ensemble. Within fashion editorials in which Beyond Retro garments were included, Alan's contribution was recognized only by a name credit to Beyond Retro in the captions to specific ensembles.

McRobbie (1989b) argues that, because of the increasing visibility of second-hand garments in the expanding media of the 1980s, the major fashion labels were able to practice a sort of ‘parasitism’ on the creativity of subcultural participants and ragmarket shoppers (1989b: 28). That is, the media is theorized as a ‘threat’ to the subcultural activities of second-hand shoppers. As discussed in the literature review, Thornton (1995) argues that the media is consistently theorized as a threat to the creation of subcultures, arguing instead that niche media – the music and style press – ‘construct subcultures as much as they document them’ (1995: 117). In the case of Beyond Retro, attention from a range of popular fashion media sources – not only the ‘niche media’ – is actively solicited. What is significant here is that, unlike in McRobbie (1989b) and Thornton’s (1995) arguments, the presence of second-hand garments within the fashion media is analysed *not* in relation to the creative consumption of subcultural participants, but rather in relation to the business strategies of a second-hand retail operation.

Beyond Retro is a critical node in the second-hand market chain, as evidenced by the fact that almost all of the second-hand garments used in the fashion images and editorials collected during the empirical research project were sourced from Beyond Retro or from its rival London-based second-hand chain store, Rokit. Like Beyond Retro, Rokit is a second-hand chain store with four London locations and an online store. The interior retail design of the shop locations resembles that of Beyond Retro in that it is a carefully constructed jumble of vintage garments, organized by type. Like Beyond Retro, moreover, Rokit allows its garments to be used in magazine editorial images. Jen explained Beyond Retro’s policy,

We have a really liberal policy with press loans. If it’s for prints, we’ll lend it out to you for, you know, a week or two: free. And therefore we always get a name credit. Even if you look in a lot of high fashion magazines, they’ll always be like ‘Beyond Retro piece featured’, and the indie magazines really love us.

Through the ‘name credit’ Beyond Retro is legitimated as a source of fashionable goods. This process of legitimation is far from straightforward, however. That is, the questions of *how* Beyond Retro is being legitimated and *by whom* Beyond Retro is being legitimated emerge.

Within the contemporary popular fashion media data collected as part of the empirical research project, I found instances of second-hand garments used in ‘where to shop’ fashion segments as well as in styled fashion editorials across a range of popular fashion print media genres. Alan’s interview further supported this point. He explained,

Alan: There's a really big range. A range from *Vogue* to *NME*, even like *Heat* and *The Sun* newspaper.

RL: What is *The Sun* doing?

Alan: *The Sun*...they often...the newspapers often have like a very expensive item and then they make a comparison with an item of clothing you can get from here with a more limited budget. But because this is kind of high-end fashion store and has a good reputation, it's not too challenging for *The Sun* readership.

[...]

RL: With *Vogue* is it the same sort of thing with the budget?

Alan: *Vogue* styles our clothes in with designer clothes, and most of the lifestyle magazines and fashion magazines, they mix things because um...it's...often I find the differences aren't just with the item – the choice of item. Often the items go out over and over again because it's an outlandish, attractive thing. It's how it's placed in context is the difference in terms of styling in magazines. So *Vogue* obviously is a high-end publication, so they'll mix it with like the highest brands of designers' wear. Say *Dazed* might do it for a youthful thing and mix it with much younger, more up-and-coming designers, and it will be a much, much more vibrant image. It's the uses that change, but the items often stay the same...not that we're limited – you can see how big the store is (laughs).

Alan's discussion of *The Sun*'s use of Beyond Retro garments is shrouded in elitism, whilst simultaneously pointing towards the ambiguous position of Beyond Retro within the field of fashion. In saying that Beyond Retro's garments are 'not too challenging for *The Sun* readership', and thus implying that garments from a more obscure second-hand clothing store might not be as appropriate to put within the publication's pages, Alan pinpoints Beyond Retro's seemingly 'mainstream' quality. Further, in calling Beyond Retro a 'high-end fashion store' with a 'good reputation', he draws attention to Beyond Retro's dominant position within the field of fashion as well as a blurring of the lines between second-hand clothes and 'high-end fashion'.

The presence of second-hand garments within high fashion publications was pervasive within the data collected as part of this research. For example, in a 'More dash than cash' segment in *Vogue* (September 2009: 208), suggestions were made for which wool blazers to buy and where to buy them. The suggested blazers were from Joseph (£495), Tommy Hilfiger (£280) and Beyond Retro (£15). In this type of representation Beyond Retro's garments are legitimated as affordable options for readers to buy. Moreover, this form of representation can be seen as an example of *Vogue*'s 'authoritative voice' (König 2006: 212). According to König (2006), '*Vogue* frequently strikes the tone of the informed voice of authority imparting wisdom' (212): here, where to find fashionable blazers. This 'authoritative voice' is visible within *Vogue*'s styled editorials, as well. For example, as discussed in Chapter Five, one caption to the leather-focused editorial featuring Pixie Geldof suggested, 'try Hi Star and Rellik for authentic Eighties jackets' (*Vogue* September 2009: 239). Within these two examples of *Vogue*'s 'authoritative voice', second-hand sources are legitimated as viable shopping sites.

It is significant that it is *Vogue* that is consecrating second-hand garments and

sources in such a way. *Vogue* is arguably an 'established' player within the field of fashion with a high level of symbolic capital. It is for this reason that *Vogue* has access to, to use Alan's words, 'the highest brands of designer wear' (see Lynge-Jorlén (2009) for a discussion of the way in which status within the field of fashion media is marked through a publication's access to garments from high fashion brands). As an 'established' player, moreover, *Vogue* is not commonly associated with 'alternative' or 'subcultural' styles. In consecrating second-hand garments, therefore, the magazine legitimates itself as an institution in possession of alternative fashion capital. *Vogue* works further to legitimate its 'alternative' credentials by featuring hip young celebrities within its pages. Indeed, the previously mentioned editorial featuring Pixie Geldof worked simultaneously to consecrate Geldof as a contemporary fashion icon and model and to legitimate *Vogue* as an institution rich in 'alternative' social capital, as Geldof is represented across the contemporary popular fashion media as a 'hip' young woman with ties to contemporary 'alternative' and music cultures. These inclusions of second-hand garments and Geldof within *Vogue*'s pages can be seen, not as attempts by the 'established' magazine to produce 'the defensive discourse of orthodoxy, the right-thinking, right-wing thought that is aimed at restoring the equivalent of silent assent to doxa' (Bourdieu 1993b: 73), but rather as attempts to adjust itself to the shifts and changes occurring within the contemporary field of popular fashion.

2. Stylists

That Alan mentions the inclusion of second-hand garments within contemporary fashion editorials serves as an introduction to the central focus of the second section of this chapter: the figure of the stylist. Within the contemporary field of popular fashion, the stylist is a consecrated creator of images. Nixon (1996: 180-181) explains, 'the role of the stylist was to produce an innovative "look" rather than to present a designer's new range or the latest seasonal "looks"'. McRobbie (1998: 157) defines this figure further:

The stylist operates within the space between the design work and the creation of a broader environment or setting for that work. He or she does this by bringing those items into a particular and 'styled' relationship with other pieces of clothing... [Stylists] planned and then put the whole image on the page together, including the combination of clothes (usually from a range of different designers) the look of the model, including hair and make up, the props needed for the narrative or non-narrative setting, the lighting and the overall 'look' of the image or series of images.

In short, the stylist engages in the activity of "'making images" as creative work' (McRobbie 1998: 159).

In consecrating second-hand garments by including them in the editorial image s/he produces, a stylist also works to legitimate his/her own creativity. An advertorial that appeared in *Dazed & Confused* (September 2009) serves as evidence for this point. An advertorial is a paid advertisement that appears in a magazine's pages as a fashion editorial. Each page in the *Dazed & Confused* advertorial is thus dedicated to a different paying advertiser: Edwin Jeans, Adidas, Nike, Reebok, Miss Sixty and Levi's. One of the advantages of presenting garments within an advertorial as opposed to a conventional advertisement is that the editorial format is understood to serve as a more 'creative' setting for the representation of the garments. In the *Dazed & Confused* advertorial the 'creative' setting is constructed precisely through the technique of including second-hand garments in the images; for example, a bodysuit and denim shorts from Rokit were styled into the images featuring Nike and Christopher Shannon for Reebok, respectively (*Dazed & Confused* September 2009: 82 and 86). Other techniques the stylist – Celestine Cooney – uses are that of combining different garments into unique ensembles and altering the presentation of the garments: for example, a pushed-up sleeve or an untied boot. In building this 'creative' setting for the representation of the garments, Cooney marks her own creativity.

2.1. *The rise of the stylist*

One way to problematize further the creativity of the stylist is to historicize this figure. The figure of the stylist is tightly linked to the style publications that emerged in the 1980s and expanded in the 1990s: specifically, *i-D* and *The Face* (Cotton 2000: 6; McRobbie 1998: 158). Chapter Five of this thesis explored the way in which these publications, and specifically *i-D*, produced a new form of fashion imagery in the 1980s: 'street style' images. During the 1990s, these publications took this realist aesthetic a step further (Lynge-Jorlén 2009). Smedley (2000: 143) defines this photography as marked by a 'gritty "warts and all" realistic style that eclipsed the glossy, groomed fashion spreads of the past'. He argues further, this form of fashion photography emerged within the chasm created between the glossy fashion imagery of high fashion magazines and the 'straight up' imagery found in the style magazines in the 1980s (2000: 147). Realist fashion photography of the 1990s did indeed share much in common with the 'straight-up'. As Cotton (2000) argues, like street style images, realist fashion photographs worked to represent 'reality'. She writes,

[...] by showing non-professional models wearing their own clothes, the way in which clothes are fashioned by the wearer for daily life was played out in a magazine context. In this desire to represent the 'real' character of the models, the distinction between portrait and fashion

photography became blurred (2000: 6; see also Rhodes 2008).

These images were far from straightforward depictions of 'reality' and 'real' people, however. Rather, these were highly constructed images. The garments worn by the models, for example, were not those worn by the models in their daily lives, but were artfully selected by the stylists working on the shoot. In this way, realist fashion photography of the 1990s shared much in common with glossy fashion imagery.

It could be argued that the work of styling/fashion editing has always been an integral component to the construction of fashion images; however, with the exception of Caroline Baker at *Nova* (1960s), stylists' work was frequently unacknowledged. It was only within the style publications of the 1980s that stylists were consecrated as co-creators of fashion images, and the work of Ray Petri at *The Face* was significant to this transition (see Cotton 2000). It was only when those people doing this type of work 'began to realize their own creative input into the fashion pages and the freelance potential of their work' that 'styling became a recognized job' (McRobbie 1998: 157). An article Edward Enninfu – the then fashion editor at *i-D* – wrote for the November 1994 issue of the magazine supports McRobbie's argument. He claimed,

Today, stylists are more influential than ever [...] the word 'stylist' no longer accurately describes these visionary upstarts. They control more than just clothes. They are creators in their own right, manufacturing the images that we consume daily, the aesthetic perceptions we have of ourselves and others, the way in which we see and are seen by the world we live in (*i-D* November 1994: 54).

Nonetheless, Enninfu also explained, 'you still won't know their names. This is a celebration of unsung heroes' (*i-D* November 1994: 52-3).

The fashion industry and media have changed significantly since the 1980s and through the 1990s, however. Chapter Five of this thesis, for example, charted how the regime of 'style' representations has proliferated over the past thirty years, bringing attention to the fact that a form of fashion imagery that began as *i-D*'s visual signature in the early 1980s has transformed into one of the predominant forms of representing fashion in contemporary culture. It can be argued further that, over the past thirty years, the figure of the stylist has followed a similar trajectory. Stylists are no longer creating fashion editorials solely for the alternative style press, but for a range of popular fashion media publications. Within the present empirical research project, such publications included *i-D*, *Dazed & Confused*, *Vogue*, *Elle*, *Ponytail*, *Pop*, *LOVE*, *Grazia*, *Nylon*, *The Sunday Times Style Magazine*, as well as the occasional feature in the daily papers (*The London Paper* and *London Lite*). Moreover, as was discussed in Chapter Five, stylists work for

contemporary music magazines and for musicians, as well. Thus, the figure of the stylist has become increasingly prominent throughout the fields of popular music and popular fashion, in the UK and more broadly.

The figure of the stylist occupies a position within the contemporary field of fashion that is marked by a high level of symbolic capital. Some stylists have amassed a high level of economic capital, as well. This point is evidenced forcefully in the figure of Katie Grand. One of the founders of *Dazed & Confused* with Rankin and Jefferson Hack in the early 1990s, Grand began her own niche fashion magazine – *Pop* – in 2000, owned by Bauer Consumer Media, Ltd. In 2009, backed by funding from Condé Nast, she began another title – *LOVE* – for which she continues to serve as editor-in-chief (Collard 2009: np). Grand has also worked for a variety of fashion brands on their advertising and catwalk shows – work for which it was reported in 2009 that she earned as much as £4,000 per day (Collard 2009: np). Similarly, Lady Gaga’s stylist – Nicola Formichetti – is widely recognized for his work at the Haus of Gaga and his work as the creative director at Thierry Mugler. Like Grand, he worked at *Dazed & Confused* before moving on to work with Lady Gaga and at Mugler.

As examples, Grand and Formichetti bring attention not only to the increased status of the stylist, but also to a diversification of the role of the stylist. As Cotton notes,

In an extension of the traditional role of the stylist, [stylists] have become present at every stage of the design process – gathering visual references, advising on fabric, co-ordinating catwalk shows, styling advertising campaigns (2000: 6; see also McRobbie 1998: 158).

The stylist is now fully legitimated as an integral contributor to the creation of fashion at various stages of its material and symbolic production. As a result, London College of Fashion currently offers formal educational training in styling work at the undergraduate university level. Thus, this art of ‘bringing [garments] into a particular and “styled” relationship with other pieces of clothing’ (McRobbie 1998: 157), which was once identified with the alternative style publications and realist fashion images of the 1980s and 1990s, is now consecrated as a creative act within and across the contemporary field of popular fashion in the UK.

2.2. Professional creative labour and personal dress practices

This work of stylists as consecrated creators of fashion images can be placed in productive dialogue with the interview respondents’ ‘practices of the self’, analysed in the preceding chapter. In her book *Imperfect Beauty: The Making of Contemporary Fashion Photographs*, Cotton (2000) presents interviews with several of the stylists (and photographers and art

directors) who produced images for *i-D* and *The Face* in the 1980s and 1990s. In recounting his early work experiences, Enniful suggested that the work he produced for *i-D* stood in contrast to established fashion codes, discussing how he would customize ensembles as opposed to following the trends that came off the Parisian runways (Cotton 2000: 36). The stylist Melanie Ward and the photographer Corinne Day, who worked together on Kate Moss's debut editorial 'Third Summer of Love' for *The Face* (July 1990), recalled scouring second-hand ragmarkets to find garments to be used in the images they created (Cotton 2000: 76 and 84). Ward explained further that, even when she did gain access to designer garments, she continued to mix them with 'found' things (Cotton 2000: 76). Moreover, Ward and Day similarly described their work as a reflection of the youth culture of which they were taking part. Ward stated, 'The stories we were producing were personal statements, reflected in music and the rave scene that had just started' (Ward, quoted in Cotton 2000: 76). Reminiscing on the iconic 'Third Summer of Love' editorial, Day stated, 'I always bought clothes that I would wear myself. Music was our inspiration for the "Third Summer of Love" photographs...Kate and I loved Nirvana, The Stone Roses and Happy Mondays' (Day, quoted in Cotton 2000: 84).

Enniful, Ward and Day's discourse carries the themes of customization, mixing second-hand and first-hand garments and the links between a fashionable aesthetic, on the one hand, and music and youth cultures, on the other. These three themes have all been problematized in the preceding chapter in relation to the respondents' discourses on the self. That the practices through which these pioneering stylists (and photographer) define their professional labour greatly resemble the respondents' 'practices of the self' points to the fact that the respondents' dress practices of 'mixing and matching' and customization can be analysed, not only in relation to contemporary 'street style' and 'festival fashion' representations, but also in relation to the markers of membership within the contemporary field of fashion. 'Mixing and matching' can be seen as a means of identifying with the newly influential figure of the stylist and the cultural capital that this figure exercises.

This blurring between stylists' professional practices and the respondents' 'practices of the self' can be problematized further in relation to Samantha – a respondent interviewed with her boyfriend, Justin, at Field Day festival in Victoria Park, East London. Samantha revealed within interview that she was working as a fashion editor; she said, 'I style Margaret Howell's show or style Matthew Williamson, Stella McCartney, Topshop advertising, so lots of different things'. What becomes clear within this short description is that, not only is Samantha working as a stylist, but also that she is quite successful in that she has several high-profile labels and brands as her clients. When discussing her

styling work, Samantha's discourse greatly resembled some of the respondents' discourses on the self in that she brought attention to looking around at others and taking inspiration from their looks. For example, she discussed the festival with her boyfriend Justin:

Samantha: Definitely here today, it's a good eye-opener to see what younger – we're not that old [indicating her boyfriend, Justin] – but it's always interesting to see how younger people are interpreting what's going on, and there's definitely a lot of exposure that I'd draw from here and use somewhere else on something I'm working on. Even if it's a different way someone ties a shoe, or a jacket...There is definitely a lot of, in all these kinds of places, there's a lot of inspiration, so I always find these things quite interesting, even though we're hiding under a tree. We're actually people-watching.

RL: Yes, that's what I'm doing myself.

Samantha: Yeah, a lot of people watching.

RL: What have you seen that's good or inspiring you?

Justin: I just think, as a whole, we were saying before you even came over, it's quite interesting how everyone's got a very similar look.

Samantha: As much as people wear things individually, there's still a definite trend. There are definitely trends going on, like everywhere.

[At this point in the interview, a man wearing what looked to be velvet Ralph Lauren slippers walked by].

Samantha: [to RL] You need to definitely go get him.

Justin: Yeah, you always see a little something. Maybe you don't take it in totally.

Samantha: Yeah, I'll go away and probably remember something I've seen here and be like, 'Oh, where does that come from?' and be like 'that probably comes from there'.

Here, Samantha reproduced the discourse of looking at and taking inspiration from others that, it was argued in the preceding chapter, emerged within some of the respondents' discussions of the festival. Unlike these other respondents, however, Samantha created a distance between herself and others. For example, in stating that 'it's a good eye-opener to see what *younger people* are doing', Samantha removed herself from the age category of the majority of people attending the festival. What these 'younger' people are doing is understood as different from what she would normally do. In so speaking, Samantha reproduced a discourse associating youth culture with innovation – a discourse that is related to academic and journalistic discourses on 'style', analysed in Chapters One and Five, respectively.

The distance Samantha created between herself and others within her milieu is materialized through her position under a tree. Through the act of observing from this hidden position, Samantha could watch others, whereas they might miss her. The gaze that she employed thus differed from that of the other respondents. It was argued that, for these other respondents, the gaze circulated around the space of the festival, creating a potential equality amongst festival-goers. In contrast, Samantha constructed a

relationship between herself and the others at the festival in which she, alone, controlled the power of the gaze. That is, she took on a dominant role within the dynamics of the gaze, objectifying others within her milieu, as opposed to seeing them intersubjectively as other 'selves'.

This distance between Samantha and the other respondents can be problematized further in relation to embodied practice. Samantha drew on an entirely different set of discourses when discussing her own dress practices.

RL: Would you say in the way you dress that you have a style for yourself? A unified look?

Samantha: With me I think it depends on what job you're on and where you are. Amazingly, with fashion editors they always end up wearing black. And you'll see like a clan of them at the shows and everyone's sort of...you know, you might want like an innovative shoe. Generally, on a day-to-day basis, I'm either in black or in neutrals like blue and white, but that's because I work on lots of quite simple brands...well, other than Matthew [Williamson]. I work on quite a lot of simple, basic brands. And that's why my styling is, and that's just what I like, as well, so I suppose that is where...

Samantha has internalized the 'rules' of dress for those people working within the fashion industry. For example, in only wearing black garments on a regular basis, Samantha has taken on the dress code stereotypically associated with fashion industry insiders. Entwistle and Rocamora's (2006) work on the high fashion habitus is useful for analysing Samantha's dress practices. Within an analysis of London Fashion Week as a materialization of the field of fashion, they argue that 'dressing the part' is an essential mode of participation at the event and thus within the field of fashion, more generally. They continue, fashion capital can be 'objectified [...] in the guise of clothes and accessories from fashionable and exclusive brands' or embodied: 'examples would include one's weight – a thin, toned body being a fashionable body' (2006: 746). Samantha demonstrated her high fashion capital further, by explaining,

If it's black I try to wear something really interesting within that, so I try to wear a cut or a shape or a, you know, a certain design within...and a really good shoe if I'm going out somewhere. It's always quite simple. At the moment it's about the staple shoe, so all of us have gone out and bought amazing Nicholas Kirkwoods or, you know, amazing YSL Kate shoes, which make like a black trouser with something...So I'm like that, I try to go for basics and then kind of...

This discussion of Nicholas Kirkwood or YSL 'Kate' shoes points not only to her knowledge of high fashion shoe trends, but also to her economic capital, as both types of shoes cost several hundred pounds. That such dress practices serve as a marker of her participation within the contemporary fashion industry does not go unnoticed by Samantha, as she noted that all fashion editors seem to be wearing the same things as she.

Samantha's dress practices can be compared to both her professional practice of styling *and* the other interview respondents' 'practices of the self'. Firstly, that Samantha's dress practices and styling practices differ so drastically points to a disjuncture between the fashionable aesthetic worn by 'cultural intermediaries' and that which they create and disseminate to magazine readers and consumers. Of course, some stylists do indeed employ 'mixing and matching' within their own embodied practices of dress: for example, Katie Grand. Nonetheless, the point remains that there exists a certain set of codes followed by 'cultural intermediaries' and industry insiders – codes that differ from those having to do with the fashion imagery, fashion trends and the fashion cycle that these 'cultural intermediaries' work to produce. Secondly, that Samantha's professional styling practices resemble some of the respondents' 'practices of the self' points to a connection between the theoretical concepts of field and the self. That is, the acts through which Samantha gains symbolic and economic capital within the field of fashion greatly resemble the acts through which some of the other interview respondents produce themselves. Further, that both of these practices have to do with contemporary fashion imagery is unsurprising. One of the goals of this thesis has been to explore the connections between discourse, the self and field. In other words, this thesis has explored the way in which contemporary fashion discourse shapes the construction of contemporary fashionable identities *and* the way in which this discourse emerges from specific fields of cultural production, whilst simultaneously informing the organization of those fields. That a stylist's professional practices align with the other interview respondents' 'practices of the self' serves as evidence of these interconnections.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the status of some agents within the contemporary field of fashion is constructed in and through the notion of the 'alternative'. It was argued that Beyond Retro uses the fact that 'alternative' second-hand garments are now valued within the contemporary field of fashion in the UK for positioning within the field. It was argued further that stylists, now consecrated creators of images, were first identified within the 'alternative' style press of the 1980s. However, the content of this chapter extended beyond a discussion of the contemporary field of popular fashion in the UK and its players. In talking about how Beyond Retro's retail design produces a 'creative' consumer and in discussing the overlaps between stylists' professional labour and the interview respondents' 'practices of the self', this chapter has made a connection between developments within the contemporary field of fashion, on the one side, and the possibilities for the construction of the self, on the other. Through these explorations of

the struggles of field agents and the emergence of new possibilities for the construction of the self, this chapter has attempted to provide an historicized account of the contemporary field of popular fashion, paying attention to both the rise of the figure of the stylist and to changes that have occurred within the second-hand retail sector since McRobbie's (1989b) seminal article.

Although arguing that the context of popular fashion in the UK has changed drastically over the past twenty years, there remain continuities between what once was and what is today. Samantha's interview is helpful when making sense of how the past continues to resonate within contemporary popular fashion culture. As an offhand gesture of explanation for why she only wears black, Samantha stated, 'when I was a kid, I was an indie kid, so I was into the grunge thing. So I wore black then as well, so I probably haven't changed much'. Thornton (1995) argues that some jobs emerge directly from participation in a specific youth/sub-/club culture, such as DJs and promoters. Similarly, McRobbie (1998: 9) writes about the transition many young people have taken from being youth cultural participants and consumers to working in the cultural industries. Although it would be difficult to argue that Samantha's participation within indie as a teenager directly informed her work as a stylist, the fact that she draws a connection between these two moments in her life points to continuity between the alternative past and a fashionable present. I have attempted to foreground this continuity throughout this chapter. That is, I have attempted to show how those objects, people and institutions that were once marked as alternative continue to be marked as 'alternative'. Again, it is not that what was once alternative has now become mainstream, but rather that those objects, people and institutions that are 'alternative' today have great symbolic value and status within the contemporary field of popular fashion in the UK.

Conclusion

According to the subcultural model, a style emerges within a youth cultural group as a sign of resistance to hegemonic culture; however, as the youth cultural industries appropriate the codes of the style, its meaning – its power – is lost. Aesthetically, subcultural styles are spectacular in appearance, challenging assumed codes of respectability through audacious combinations of garments. As these styles diffuse, however, the uniqueness of the looks fade, their originality is forgotten. In contrast, the indie look had quite humble beginnings. Although identified by Simon Reynolds (1989) as a child-like look ‘resistant’ to the trends of the high street in the 1980s, for the most part the indie look was neither celebrated for its originality, nor condemned for its absurdity; it was simply overlooked.

In building an analysis of indie through an attention to the indie look, this thesis presents an analysis of youth cultural style that re-orientates the relationship between youth culture and popular fashion. Instead of considering how the indie look diffused into popular fashion, the thesis considers how the indie look was produced precisely through indie’s interactions with popular fashion in the UK. Of course, there was always a look. As the recollections of those indie musicians that were included in *The Saatchi Gallery Magazine Art & Music* (Spring 2009) discussed in Chapter Four show, indie musicians of the 1980s had precise aesthetic tastes: a sixties look that was constructed using garments sourced from charity shops as opposed to high street stores. Thus, the term ‘produce’, as used above, does not refer to the material formation of a style. The term is used in the Foucauldian sense. As discussed in Chapter Two, according to Foucault, discourse is productive; it creates the objects about which it speaks. Drawing on Thornton’s (1995) work, Evans (1997) notes the relevance of discourse to an analysis of youth culture, suggesting that representations of youth culture – academic, journalistic, curatorial and advertising – release knowledge of a specific subculture to the wider community. This thesis has drawn on Thornton (1995) and Evans’s (1997) formulations of representation, but to a different purpose. The thesis has considered how media representations of indie work to produce indie in differing way at differing points in time, and it has explored more specifically how the contemporary construction of indie creates a space for the constitution of identity.

It is impossible to talk about a singular ‘indie identity’. Many people refuse to identify with the term, not least because, in the words of one respondent, ‘indie has become the mainstream’. Accordingly, it is difficult to place boundaries around indie. Does the term refer solely to those bands on independent labels and their fans? Does it

refer to a genre of music? Does it refer to a look? Or does it refer to all of these things in differing ways? These issues concerning identification with indie and the boundaries around indie point to the complexity of the youth cultural formation under analysis. Foucault's concepts 'discourse' and 'practices of the self' provided the tools through which to problematize such complexity. The question that was addressed in this thesis is one that is not about 'indie identity' per se, but rather about the process of identification within contemporary indie.

Using the Foucauldian concept discourse, the thesis analysed the way in which media representations not only produce indie, but in so doing also produce a space for the construction of the self. Chapter Five explored these representations, drawing attention to two discourses that emerged within them: a discourse of indie 'authenticity' and a discourse of 'stylish' femininity. The former discourse perpetuates a notion of 'resistance' to fashion in that the significance of fashion and appearance are consistently de-emphasized within representations of male indie musicians. The latter discourse constitutes the notion of 'style', defined as the ability of a person to create an 'individual' look outside of the influence of the dictates of the fashion industry. Following Foucault, the thesis considers not only how such discourses constitute the notions of 'authenticity' and 'style', but also how they create a space for the construction of subjectivity.

Chapter Six responded to the analysis presented in Chapter Five through an exploration of the 'practices of the self' of those people participating in the youth cultural formation of indie. It first considered the discrepancies within the male respondents' discourses on the self. Some respondents addressed fashion and appearance in vague terms. In contrast, other male respondents discussed the significance of 'the look' to the ways in which they construct the self. The chapter used the Bourdieuan (1984, 1993a) concept 'capital', as well as the concepts 'subcultural capital' (Thornton 1995) and 'fashion capital' (Rocamora 2002; Entwistle and Rocamora 2006), to explain why it is that some of the male respondents spoke about fashion and appearance, whilst others did not. That is, those respondents who mobilized their 'subcultural capital' avoided speaking about fashion because clothing the body was seen to be 'second nature'; however, Harry – a unique respondent in many ways – mobilized his 'fashion capital', for example, as he spoke about the influence of Hedi Slimane's collections for Dior Homme on his own clothing and dress choices. This theme of capital is central to the analysis presented in the second part of the chapter, as well. This part analysed how the female respondents inhabit the subject positions created within contemporary 'street style' and 'festival fashion' representations, arguing that the extent to which they inhabit such representations depends upon the

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amount of alternative fashion capital that they mobilize within their ‘practices of the self’.

Taken together, Chapter Five and Six make important contributions to scholarly work concerning an integrated methodological framework of representation and dress practice, the dialogue between the theoretical concepts Foucault developed in the first and third stages of his career and, finally, the compatibility of the work of Foucault and Bourdieu. The first of these contributions was outlined in detail in the literature review (Chapter One). Here, I would like to discuss in greater detail the latter two contributions. As noted in the thesis’s introduction, Stuart Hall (1996) draws on ‘practices of the self’ within his analysis of identity, suggesting that the Foucauldian concept allows a researcher to consider identity as constituted within discourse, yet ‘there is the *production* of self as an object in the world, the practices of self-constitution, recognition and reflection’ (Hall 1996: 13; emphasis in original). Crucially, Hall (1996: 13) continues, ‘The question which remains is whether we also require to, as it were, close the gap between the two’. Hall (1996: 14) suggests that Foucault’s approach with ‘practices of the self’ is a ‘*phenomenology* of the subject [...] which is in danger of being overwhelmed by an overemphasis on intentionality – precisely because it cannot engage with *the unconscious*’ (emphasis in original). In contrast, he explains further, Butler’s performativity (1999 [1990]) draws on psychoanalysis to make this connection between subject position and self. In contrast still, this thesis demonstrates how Bourdieu’s (1993a, 1993b) concept of ‘capital’ can be used to forge this connection. As discussed above, one way to make sense of *how* the interview respondents inhabit the subject positions created within discourse is to consider what sort of knowledges – cultural capitals – they are drawing on within their ‘practices of the self’. Thus, this thesis makes a theoretical contribution by forging a link between discourse and ‘practices of the self’ through the Bourdieuan concepts of field and capital.

Along with making this theoretical contribution, the thesis produces new knowledge in varying ways – knowledge that can serve as a foundation from which future research on youth culture and popular fashion can be staged. As noted in the introduction, the thesis provides new knowledge on indie – a little-researched and ‘mainstream’ youth cultural formation. This thesis serves as an example for future researchers concerning *how* and *why* to explore ‘mainstream’ youth cultural formations. In relation to the issue of *how*, by considering the way in which historically and field-specific discourses constitute youth cultures, the thesis creates a theoretical framework for research that looks beyond ‘spectacular’ styles to examine the imbricated nature of contemporary youth culture. It is in relation to the theme of identity that the thesis demonstrates *why* there is value in

exploring 'mainstream' youth cultures. As shown in the literature review (Chapter One), scholars have developed frameworks for research based upon the concepts of 'resistance' and 'individuality' to explore the way in which youth cultural identities form; in short, identity is a key theme of youth cultural research. This thesis shows, like analyses based on 'resistance' and 'individuality', an analysis of a 'mainstream' formation reveals new knowledge about the construction of identity. Here, the analysis of indie identities reveals new knowledge about the way in which identities are formed in and through the overlaps and interconnections amongst youth culture, music and popular fashion within contemporary popular culture in the UK *and* about contemporary constructions of gender.

Concerning gender, the thesis provides a rare glimpse into how the masculine self is constructed through dress practice, complementing Entwistle's (2004) research on the experience of male modeling. Specifically, the thesis shows how, within indie, masculinity is experienced through a tension between a 'rejection' of and an acceptance of fashion. In highlighting the role this tension plays in shaping the experience of indie masculinity, the thesis also draws attention to the fact that indie masculinity is produced in and through the overlaps and divergences of the value systems of the sub-field of indie music and the field of popular fashion in the UK. Future research on youth culture and popular fashion can consider further these connections between the value systems of fields of cultural production, on the one hand, and the construction and experience of the (gendered) self, on the other. As discussed in the literature review (Chapter One), research on fashion can be categorized into two groups: analyses of fashion representations and analyses of dress practices. Similarly, with the exception of Nixon (2003) and Lynge-Jorlén's (2009) work, fashion research rarely attempts to combine analysis of cultural production and analysis of the self. This thesis thus serves as an example for future research concerning how both representation *and* fields of cultural production form contexts within which the self is constituted. Further, in exploring the ambivalent codings of masculinity within representations of indie musicians as well as the overlaps and conflicts between the value systems of the field of popular fashion and the sub-field of indie music, this thesis reminds future researchers that the cultural contexts in which the self forms are far from straightforward.

The thesis also adds new knowledge to the small body of literature on representations of 'style' and 'street style' by considering how people invest in such representations and internalize the 'truths' of these discourses. For example, through the analysis of 'festival fashion', the thesis provides new knowledge on 'practices of the self' by demonstrating how such practices are intersubjective and spatialized. Future research on

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popular fashion can consider further these issues of intersubjectivity and space. Chapter Six shows how many of the respondents share a sense of egalitarian spirit with their peers, taking inspiration from what these others are wearing at festivals and 'on the street'. Yet, what becomes clear through the analysis is that these respondents are only looking at those people dressed in a similar way to them: in the indie look or related styles. In the words of Rocamora and O'Neill (2008: 193), 'The multiplicity of the people, the diversity of the street and the complexity of the real are brushed aside'. This point is quite alarming when one extends such a formulation to the other spaces inhabited by the respondents: specifically, London Fields and Brick Lane. Both areas are situated in East London and are currently witness to radical processes of gentrification. The respondents' experiences of the 'street' can be understood as an example of the *experience* of gentrification, in which the diversity of the local people in terms of ethnicity, faith, social status and class is effectively pushed aside. Future research on popular fashion can consider this experience of gentrification through fashion and dress further: how it relates to spaces and, more importantly, the consequences of this process on the other people inhabiting these spaces – people who are seemingly invisible within 'realist' representations of and experiences of the 'street'.

Finally, the thesis produces a new analysis of second-hand retail and the figure of the stylist, not only contributing to the small bodies of literature on these areas, but also drawing attention to the significance of the 'alternative' within contemporary popular fashion in the UK. It is at this point that I want to make clear that this thesis does not argue that alternative cultural forms cease to exist. Indeed, Gregson and Crewe's (2003) exploration of car-boot sales draws attention to a form of second-hand retail that continues to sit outside of the boundaries of 'mainstream' retail. Instead, the thesis brings attention to just one strand of the history of popular fashion in the UK – a strand that has witnessed not simply the diffusion of the indie subculture into the 'mainstream', but also the increasing significance of the 'alternative' within 'mainstream' fashion discourse and the established fashion industry. The thesis introduces the concept alternative fashion capital to make sense of this wider phenomenon: to try to account for the way in which associations with the 'alternative' are drawn on within contemporary practices of self-creation and strategies of field-positioning. Future research on popular fashion can consider further a discourse of the 'alternative' and how it circulates throughout contemporary fashion culture. Such an analysis will contribute to the field of Fashion Studies a historicized account of the contemporary field of fashion. Indeed, as fashion is

always changing, it is important to capture such historical moments, exploring their richness before they disappear, only to be replaced by other, equally significant, moments.

Appendix 1: List of interviewees

1. Adam and Rebecca – London – 30 May 2009 (Pilot interview)
2. Sarah and Helen – Brighton, Great Escape Festival – 14 May 2009
3. Will and Joe – Brighton – 15 May 2009
4. Tom, Arnold and Harry – Brighton, Great Escape Festival – 15 May 2009
5. Sam and Nancy – Brighton, Great Escape Festival – 16 May 2009
6. Mick – London, near East End Thrift Store – 7 June 2009
7. Jack and Joan – London, near East End Thrift Store – 7 June 2009
8. Dave – London, Beyond Retro employee – 16 June 2009
9. Bob and Pilar – London, 1234 Festival – 26 July 2009
10. Richard – London, 1234 Festival – 26 July 2009
11. Nicole and Iris – London, 1234 Festival – 26 July 2009
12. Katie and Tara – London, 1234 Festival – 26 July 2009
13. Christina and Jill – London, Field Day Festival – 1 August 2009
14. Antonia and Ellie – London, Field Day Festival – 1 August 2009
15. Samantha and Justin – London, Field Day Festival – 1 August 2009
16. Sean and Steve – London, Field Day Festival – 1 August 2009
17. Silvia and Kara, London, outside Beyond Retro – 9 August 2009
18. Claire and Anna – London, outside Beyond Retro – 9 August 2009
19. James – London, Broadway Market – 23 August 2009
20. Abby and Eric – London, Broadway Market – 23 August 2009
21. Ben and Simona – Reading Festival – 30 August 2009
22. Tanya and Danielle – Reading Festival – 30 August 2009
23. Jenna and Alexa – Reading Festival – 30 August 2009
24. Elaine and Betty – Reading Festival – 30 August 2009
25. Paul – London, outside Beyond Retro – 10 September 2009
26. Jen – Beyond Retro employee – 16 June 2009
27. Alan – Beyond Retro employee – 16 June 2009

Appendix 2: Jen and Alan's interviewing schedules

Jen and Alan, themselves, largely determined the structure and content of the interviews. Accordingly, I have listed here not the questions I asked, as there were very few, but rather the topics covered in the two interviews.

Jen – a member of Beyond Retro's print archive department:

- Beyond Retro's sourcing and sorting processes.
- Trend reports.
- The textile archives department.
- Trends within Beyond Retro's stock.
- Beyond Retro's store locations.
- Beyond Retro's press strategy.
- The staff.
- The term 'indie'.

Alan – Beyond Retro's press liaison:

- His role as press liaison.
- The interests and demands of magazine and musicians' stylists.
 - Florence Welch and Santigold's stylists
 - *Vogue*, *Dazed & Confused*, *NME*, *Heat* and *The Sun*
- Beyond Retro as an organization: its sourcing process and its retail stores.
- The relationship between music and fashion.
- Styling indie masculinity: what Alan called, the 'indie uniform'.

Appendix 3: Main interviewing schedule

Opening and general questions:

- What are you wearing right now?
- Where did you buy the garments you're wearing?
- [If at a festival] Did you dress for the festival?
- Do you put a lot of attention into your look?
- How would you describe your look? How might others describe your look?

Shopping:

- What kinds of clothes do you buy?
- Where do you shop?
- Do you go vintage shopping?
- Do you shop on the high street?
- How often do you go shopping?
- Why do you buy the clothes you buy? Price? Look?
- What are some of your favourite garments that you've acquired?

Leisure and work:

- Where do you go out?
- What do you wear when you go out?
- Do you have a job?
- Do you wear the same thing to work as you do when you go out?
- When did you start dressing the way you do?
- What made you start dressing the way you do?

Inspirations:

- Where do you get inspiration for how you dress?
- What looks are inspiring?
- Do you emulate styles you see on celebrities or musicians?
- Do you look at magazines and blogs?
- Do you follow fashion?
- What are your favourite styles and looks right now?
- Do you think that you dress like your friends and others around you?
- [If at a festival] Have you seen anything interesting here today?

Indie:

- Do you wear skinny jeans?
- How long have you worn them?
- Would you call your look an indie look?
- Is there an indie look?

Location:

- Where are you from?
- Do you think the way you dress is linked to [LOCATION]?
- Do you think there's a specific style in [LOCATION]?

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